

SLA soldier killed in security zone

By DAVID RUDGE

A South Lebanese Army soldier was killed and five others wounded as fighting flared in security zone yesterday following a lull.

The incident occurred when gunmen opened fire with Sagger anti-tank missiles at an SLA armored unit that was on patrol near Tair Harfa village, near Hardoun, in the western sector of the zone.

Reports from the zone said the source of the firing was close to a United Nations outpost in the area, which itself is supervised by troops from UNIFIL's Nepalese battalion.

UN officers said the Nepalese soldiers did not spot any missiles fired from the area under their control and "had no way of seeing the actual area of the attack."

Hizbullah issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack, saying members of its fighting arm, the Islamic Resistance, had fired at the SLA patrol and destroyed an armored personnel carrier.

Two of the soldiers wounded in the incident were evacuated to Nahariya Government Hospital, while the other three, all lightly wounded, were taken to Bint J'hal hospital in the western sector of the zone.

The attack, which followed the discovery and destruction on Sunday of a chain of seven roadside bombs in the eastern sector of the zone, sparked heavy exchanges that lasted for nearly two hours.

Later, in the afternoon, gunmen opened fire with light weapons at IDF and SLA positions in the eastern sector of the zone. There were no casualties or damage caused in those incidents and IDF and SLA gunners returned fire.

Brig.-Gen. Eli Amitai, head of the IDF's Lebanese Liaison Unit, was quoted on the Voice of the South radio station as saying that a special SLA unit is to be established soon that would be

able to cope better with Hizbullah's special forces squads, and would operate beyond the perimeter of the zone.

Amitai's comments followed a visit by him and senior IDF officers to an SLA training base.

He was also quoted as saying that the SLA would soon receive sophisticated equipment, including weapons, that would enable it to operate day and night.

Amitai said Hizbullah had suffered disastrous defeats which had forced it to change its methods of operation.

"They are in panic and its terrorists don't wish to take part in operations because of the good work done by the IDF and SLA," he was quoted as saying on the radio.

Meanwhile, Lebanese newspapers reported that SLA sappers had destroyed a house in Beit Leif village, in the western sector of the zone, that belongs to a former SLA security official Haidar Bashir, who defected two weeks ago.

According to the press reports, Bashir and his family left the zone and went northwards after the Israeli authorities refused to return to his family the body of a Hizbullah gunman - a relative of Bashir's - who was killed in recent fighting with IDF and SLA troops.

Sources in the zone confirmed that Bashir had left the region and that his home had been demolished.

The Lebanese newspapers also carried a statement by the Amal Shi'ite movement, claiming the its members had captured a resident of the zone, Ibrahim Mohammed Ramal, who had been spying for the IDF and SLA.

The reports said Amal activists had monitored the man, who had been passing information on movements of "resistance fighters" to the IDF and SLA, and had snatched him from the zone on Saturday night.

Peres calls for national unity government: '97 decisive year for Israel

By STEVE RODAN and SARAH HONIG

Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres, expressing fear for Israel's future, said yesterday that 1997 will decide the fate of the peace process.

"I am very scared," Peres told an audience at Tel Aviv University. "If we don't make peace by 2000 then Israel will live under a constant and ever-growing threat. I think 1997 will be decisive."

Peres pointed to the military buildup in the Middle East, particularly the Iranian program to produce ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. He said he considers Iran to be a greater threat to Israel than Syria.

"The Syrians are very difficult negotiators," Peres said. "But once they agree to something they stick to it."

Peres renewed his call for a national unity government, saying time is running out for Israel to save the peace process.

"There are some who feel you can

wait four years [until the next elections]," Peres said. "I think this is a catastrophe. This is the debate now."

Peres said his motives for establishing such a government are not to prolong his political career, but to save the peace process. "I am not looking for a job."

But he added that Labor is not negotiating with Likud over a national unity government and that he has no indication that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants such a coalition.

He criticized Netanyahu's launching of the Har Homa housing project, but noted that he did not advocate halting the project.

Several times in his address, and in a conversation earlier with reporters, Peres made it clear that his objection was to the prime minister's style of dealing with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

"What the prime minister did in his proposal for final status talks was just to gain publicity," Peres said. "The government told Arafat that Jerusalem doesn't represent anything [for the PA]. On a

Palestinian state, he said, no. You'll get 45 percent of the territories. These are negotiations? It's the construction of a confrontation. Don't reveal your positions. See what happens."

Peres recalled his long negotiating sessions with Arafat, saying the Palestinian leader has come a long way from his days as a terrorist chief. "We are making one mistake," Peres said. "Arafat won't turn into a Zionist. He won't be an Israeli. I think Arafat did several brave things. He was the only Palestinian to make a break from terror. He even fought terrorism."

At that point, a student called out, "But look what he is doing today."

Peres responded, "Look at the situation today."

Meanwhile, Peres has told several Labor MKs that he will only pursue a unity government until some time in May. Labor is slated to hold its leadership primary on June 3.

Peres is accused by supporters of leadership candidate Ehud Barak of seeking to take Labor into the government before June so he can

enter it as the senior Labor representative and thereby cement his leadership status, no matter who wins the race for party chairman.

Peres took Dalia Itzik, Nissim Zivili, Moshe Shabai, and Shevah Weiss - all in his corner in the current party battles - out to dinner and sought to allay their anxiety that only Labor which is pushing for a unity government.

The Likud, the MKs stressed, is showing no interest, and Netanyahu has yet to issue any public encouragement, much less a formal invitation.

According to sources at the meeting, Peres expressed confidence that despite vociferous opposition from Barak's supporters, he would be able to win a majority for a unity government in the Labor central committee, if his party were assured portfolio parity with the Likud and if new government guidelines are drawn up based on the commitment to continue the Oslo process.

Late last night, Peres hosted dozens of Labor central committee members in his Tel Aviv office.



Learning together

Third-graders from the Yefeh Nof school in Jerusalem and the Hope Flowers school in Bethlehem learn sculpture as part of a day of joint activities at the Jerusalem school yesterday.

(Bryan McBarney)

Expert: Arafat can't stop terror

By DAVID RUDGE

More terror attacks, including suicide bomb attempts, are likely despite preventative efforts by the Palestinian Authority, according to Dr. Menachem Klein, an expert on Palestinian affairs.

The PA is trying to put a clamp on terror activities in line with Chairman Yasser Arafat's recent pledge to the US.

Klein stressed, however, that the PA's ability to prevent acts of terror by individuals or small groups is limited.

Klein, a lecturer in the Political Science department at Bar-Ilan University, said it was unclear whether the target of the abortive suicide bomb attack in Gush Katif yesterday had been chosen deliberately or because of logistical problems.

"The planners may have deliberately decided to target settlers following the adverse reaction of Israeli peace supporters to the Aprogo cafe bombing in Tel Aviv," said Klein. He added that yesterday's target may have been chosen because of difficulties in reaching other parts of the country.

"The fact that [the attack] failed... was fortuitous for the Palestinian Authority. Had the attack succeeded it could well have spelled political disaster for Arafat and the PA," he said.

Klein said Arafat is trying to divert the struggle against the government's policies from violent confrontation and terrorism into political channels.

SOCIAL & PERSONAL

THE WEEKLY MEETING of the English-speaking Jerusalem Rotary Club will take place today at 1:00 p.m. at the YMCA, King David Tower. Mr. Shlomo Porat will speak on "Can Paper Outlive the Electronic Memory?"

Gaza settlers hope to build

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH

The Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza hopes that recent requests to increase housing in Kfar Darom and Netzarim will be approved by the Defense Ministry.

Yehiel Leiter, head of the council's foreign desk, said yesterday that settlers in the Gush Katif had informed council leaders of requests from people wishing to live there. Both settlements, he said, have a long waiting list.

Leiter laughed at reports suggesting a connection between yesterday's suicide bomb attacks and plans to build. "Believe me, there is definitely no connection," he said. "These plans have been in the pipeline for some time."

In addition, Leiter said, the council is in touch with the Ministry of Tourism, seeking to promote further tourism in the area.

Gush Katif thankful for a miracle

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH

Two mothers, one from Kfar Darom, the other from Netzarim, were almost empty, since the majority of its residents left in buses to offer a prayer of thanks at the Western Wall.

"It was a miracle," said Netzarim spokeswoman Shlomit Ziv, 27, a mother of four. Every day at 7 a.m. about 30 children from Netzarim are bused to school, she said. Minutes after the bus left the settlement, there was a strong blast. The driver turned the bus around and returned. "The children weren't hysterical. Perhaps it was because they were far away from the blast and didn't see anything," she said.

The children were sent home to stay and build a house. My home is here," she said. Yesterday afternoon, Netzarim was almost empty, since the majority of its residents left in buses to offer a prayer of thanks at the Western Wall.

"It was a miracle," said Netzarim spokeswoman Shlomit Ziv, 27, a mother of four. Every day at 7 a.m. about 30 children from Netzarim are bused to school, she said. Minutes after the bus left the settlement, there was a strong blast. The driver turned the bus around and returned. "The children weren't hysterical. Perhaps it was because they were far away from the blast and didn't see anything," she said.

The children were sent home

and had activities organized for them in the settlements. Security forces asked parents to stay home.

"We have constantly raised the issue of security in the region," Ziv said, adding the area has been the site of previous attacks. "The site where the blast occurred is usually manned by six to seven Palestinian policemen who are on duty daily standing in the guard-house shaded from the sun."

But yesterday, she said, the post was empty.

It was Arafat who gave the green light for terrorist attacks, said Shorshan, comparing it to an act of war. "Every time the Palestinians spit on us, we say it's raining. But, for how much longer?"

BOMBERS

Continued from Page 1

actions... Terrorist actions are everywhere and no one has the right to squeeze us."

Palestinian doubts about the truth of the Israeli version of the incidents took hold despite deputy national security chief Maj.-Gen. Abdel Razak Majada's statement to reporters that "the two men wore military uniforms and each one carried 5 kg. of explosives."

He added that the two sides were cooperating in the investigation.

In Nabulus, about 1,000 demonstrators broke past a Palestinian Police roadblock on the western side of town and marched toward soldiers in Israeli-controlled territory.

The mob began stoning the soldiers and hurling petrol bombs and cement blocks at them, as reinforcements were sent in to disperse the crowd. Soldiers fired rubber bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades, and a military source said some troops fired live warning shots into the air.

One of these bullets apparently hit and killed a plainclothes Palestinian policeman. "He was rioting. It doesn't matter if he was a gardener or a policeman. The very fact that he was a policeman makes it even that much more grave," said a military official.

In Hebron, soldiers shot dead a Palestinian who was apparently part of a group of thieves fleeing from Israeli police after being spotted trying to break into a warehouse. The army said a police patrol in Kiryat Arba came upon the group of Palestinians and ordered them to halt. Instead, they fled in their car, leaving behind one gang member. The car refused to stop at a roadblock, and the army said it tried to run down a policeman who opened fire at the car.

CONVERSIONS

Continued from Page 1

The passage of the first reading of the conversion legislation came a day after the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada issued a provocative statement against the Reform and Conservative movements.

"The Reform and Conservative are not Judaism at all," said Rabbi Hersch Ginsberg, acting chairman of the union. "While their adherents are Jews, their religion is not Judaism."

The leadership of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements have characterized the union as a right-wing fringe group and rejected its statements.

"We would not make such a statement or engage in such activity," said Rabbi Rafael Grossman, president of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America. "Anything that can be interpreted as a disenfranchisement of Jews in any way is absolutely unjustified and uncalled for."

But the RCA sees no paradox in opposing "disenfranchisement" and supporting the conversion bill, which the Reform movement says would separate its converts from the Jewish people.

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Tichon: Changes to Direct Election Law possible only for next Knesset

By LAY COLLINS

Any change to the Direct Elections Law can be made in the middle of a Knesset session so that the prime minister can be removed more easily while the Knesset remains in session, Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon said yesterday.

Speaking at the Knesset Association on Parliament Day, Tichon said that any amendment to the law would be only if it were to go into effect with the next election.

Tichon said the Knesset's status had not been harmed by the law and the government, in fact, faces more frequent challenges by the Knesset particularly since MKs elected by a primary election system are more concerned with their own electorate than with the party.

MK Amnon Rubinstein (Meretz) said under the new system, the Knesset had lost only one right to change the premier mid-term. Rubinstein, who supported the law,

said the main problem is that the government has less powers but more responsibilities. Prof. Avraham Diskin, a Hebrew University political scientist, and Rubinstein argued over the law. Diskin said those who had supported the direct election law had done so out of personal interests, and that the religious parties, who had feared the direct election law, had gained the most under the new system and are now opposed to changing it.

Prof. Uriel Reichman, a long-time champion of the new system, said it must be continued but he called for the electoral threshold to be raised from the current 1.5% of the vote.

Reichman said the direct election of the prime minister lent stability to the political regime, and cited examples like Turkey, where Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's party received only 21% percent of the vote.

NEWS

in brief

Two killed in motorcycle accident

Two men were killed yesterday when the motorcycle on which they were riding ran off the road and overturned near Kafr B'ida in Wadi Ara. *Itm*

Two die in apartment fire

Two men, aged 42 and 51, were killed yesterday evening in a fire that broke out in a Petah Tikva apartment. The cause of the fire was finally established last night.

An initial investigation suggested that one of them had dozed off with a lit cigarette. Since both men were apparently drunk, investigators said, they did not respond quickly enough to douse the fire, call for help or escape. *Itm*

TA burial society workers strike

Workers at the Tel Aviv Hevra Kadisha went on strike yesterday to protest MK Raphael Pinhasi's (Shas) appointment as chairman of the organization's finance committee, as well as the fact that a new labor agreement has yet to be signed. As of today, there will be no funerals in the Givat Shaul, Holon, Nahalat Yitzhak, or Yarkon cemeteries, no bodies will be picked up at hospitals, and no cemetery plots will be sold. *Itm*

Northern border locales to strike

Northern border towns are to strike today, and the town's mayors are to set up a protest tent at the border crossing at Biranit, to protest the government's failure to allocate more funding to the area's localities, as promised by the previous government after last year's Operation Grapes of Wrath.

Ma'alot-Tarshiha Mayor Shlomo Bubbut said that instead, the government has cut some NIS 100 million from the councils' budgets, in the areas of housing, tourism, and education. *Itm*

Amikam takes up Health Ministry post

Former journalist and Knesset spokesman Yair Amikam yesterday became acting deputy director-general of the Health Ministry for information and international relations.

Amikam was a journalist at *Yedioth Aharonot* for many years and for the last seven years served as Knesset public relations director. He was dismissed from the latter post by Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon, who reportedly was unhappy with Amikam's handling of publicity about renovations in his private office and a disruptive visit to the House by TV comedian Eli Yatzpan. *Judy Siegel*

Chief rabbis: Set limits to cloning

The Chief Rabbinate doesn't reject genetic engineering in principle, but limits must be set, Chief Rabbis Elishav Bakshi-Doron and Yisrael Lau told the Knesset Science and Technology Committee at Hechal Shlomo on Monday.

It was the second committee session in several weeks to discuss the ramifications of the recent cloning of a sheep in Scotland. Bakshi-Doron said that genetic engineering can benefit mankind, just as it can cause a catastrophe. Lau added that "we mustn't reach a situation in which people can be produced selectively and by mass production; such an idea is known to us from the worst dictatorships in history." *Judy Siegel*

New rules on import, sale of vitamins

New regulations signed yesterday by Health Minister Yehoshua Matza set down strict procedures for the production, import, and marketing of vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and herbs.

From now on, no therapeutic claims can be made about these food supplements. They must be produced under Good Manufacturing Practices, which include quality control and high standards of hygiene.

Every manufacturer must produce a list of documents to prove the product meets these standards. Each package must be clearly marked with the daily recommended dosage, the amount of vitamins and minerals in the products, and warnings (relating to use by children and pregnant and lactating women). The punishment for violators is a year in prison or a fine of NIS 19,300. *Judy Siegel*

Two suspects in London jewel heist remanded here

By ELLI WOLFGELER

Two men suspected of having robbed a London jewelry store at gunpoint two years ago were brought, with the help of Scotland Yard investigators, before Jerusalem Magistrate's Court yesterday, where they had their remands extended.

The two suspects, Sharon Nahum, 30, from Jerusalem, and Ayal Angel, 31, from Tel Aviv, appeared before Judge Ya'acov Tishon, who heard evidence presented by the British police investigators together with Israeli police.

It marked the first time that investigators from the two police forces had worked together on a case. The British policemen arrived here 10 days ago with evidence against the suspects.

The two suspects, and a third who was arrested yesterday and will be brought to court today or tomorrow, are charged with stealing over £320,000, after beating the shop owner with a rifle and tying him up together with his partners.

The two suspects denied the charges.

During the proceedings, friends and family of Angel burst into the courtroom and began beating up photographers and policemen. One officer was lightly injured, and four people were arrested.

Tishon extended the remand of Nahum, who is thought to be the ringleader of the gang, for nine days, and Angel's for eight days. Police investigator Yossi Cohen said in court that the trio is suspected of being part of a larger ring that robs jewelry stores.



Sharon Nahum, suspected of involvement in the armed robbery of a jewelry store in London, is brought before the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court for a remand hearing yesterday. (Brian Heller)

AT THE KNESSET

HU asked to cancel lecture on Rabin murder

By LIAT COLLINS

Labor faction chairman Ra'anan Cohen has sent a letter to Hebrew University Rector Prof. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh demanding the cancellation of today's lecture, "The Rabin Assassination - A Conspiracy by the GSS," by journalist Barry Chamish. Cohen said that since Yigal Amir had been convicted of the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, the university is "lending a hand to the despicable revision of history and desecrating Rabin's name."

A university spokeswoman said that the lecture is sponsored by the foreign students organization, not the university, and that students groups hold scores of different activities expressing different political and social opinions which do not necessarily reflect the university's stand.

"The university has reservations on the contents of the lecture, but its view, based on a legal opinion, is that this type of activity cannot be banned as long as it does not breach the law or the regulations for student activities. Freedom of expression must be preserved even when unpopular opinions are being expressed," the spokeswoman said.

Poraz: 30+ immigrants should do reserve duty. MK Avraham Poraz (Shinui) has written to Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai asking him to obligate immigrants who arrive here after the age of 30 to do reserve duty. Poraz has discovered that they are currently exempt, except for doctors.

"Citizens born here and veteran immigrants serve in the military for three years and then continue to do reserve duty sometimes until the age of 50. I see no reason why new immigrants above 30 should be exempt. I suggest that immigrants who arrive here at 30 and over do a short basic training and then do reserve duty in suitable positions," Poraz said. He said this would reduce the burden of reserve duty for others.

Elul to head committee. Rafi Elul (Labor) has been appointed to chair the Public Complaints Committee, which works under the auspices of the House Committee.

"Many of the difficulties suffered by the general public involve the smaller things in life which have more of an effect than almost anything else on the quality of life for the individual," he said. "I have no doubt that if we educate ourselves to deal with individuals attentively and with respect, it will only improve the Knesset's standing with the public."

Bill would allow vacations for parents of children with cancer. The Labor and Social Affairs Committee yesterday prepared for second reading a bill which would allow a worker to take up to 30 days vacation to care for a child with cancer. This is doubled to 60 days if both parents are employed or in the case of a single-parent family.

The committee also authorized regulations concerning employment agencies. The main regulation reduces from NIS 300,000 to NIS 150,000 the amount of money a contractor has to place as a guarantee with the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry to cover a month's wages for its workers.

IDF health issues discussed. The Committee on the Status of Women discussed health issues in the army yesterday. OC Women's Corps Brig-Gen. Yisraela Oron, told the committee the IDF is in the process of establishing a women's health center.

Naomi Chazan (Meretz) said that the IDF should make more of an effort to promote information about contraceptives and sex education to prevent the necessity of abortions.

It was decided to try to find funds for contraceptives for women soldiers whose monthly salary is only NIS 250. Currently, soldiers are entitled to a free abortion, but must pay for contraceptives.

Senior police officer sat on evidence in Bar-On affair

By RAINE MARCUS

Police are investigating why Dep.-Cmdr. Rami Zoller failed to act on journalist Erez Rotem's evidence in the Bar-On Affair. Rotem originally gave State Attorney Edna Arbel material supporting his suspicions that Ma'ariv publisher Ofer Nimrodi and his lawyer, Dan Avi-Yitzhak, were behind the original leaks about the affair.

Arbel turned the material over to National

Investigations chief Sando Mazor, but he was about to leave the country, so he left it with Zoller. Now police are checking why the team investigating the Bar-On Affair was not made aware of this material.

Nimrodi and Avi-Yitzhak are threatening to sue Channel 2 News - which broadcast the story last weekend - its journalists and Rotem, unless they retract the story and broadcast an apology.

Channel 2 News heads will meet this morning to decide how to respond.

Search for missing woman resumes near Rehovot

Police yesterday resumed the search for the body of Shlomit Bleichman, the common-law wife of Dr. Amir Hochberg, who is suspected of murdering her.

The search is focusing on the orchards east of Rehovot, near the Gan Hapekan catering hall and in back of the Chaim Weizmann estate. Police have searched the area before, but will be conducting a more thorough search, together with soldiers from the IDF's missing persons unit.

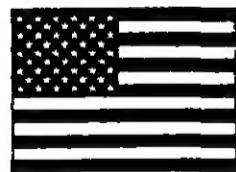
Police stressed that the search is not related to any new developments resulting from the questioning of Hochberg who, since he was arrested in Switzerland and extradited here a month ago, has not cooperated with investigators. *Itm*

CORRECTION

The price of prunes is NIS 1.98 per 100 grams, and not per kilo, as appeared in yesterday's advertisement.

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NEWS

in brief

Matza leaves for China

Health Minister Yehoshua Matza leaves today for China, where he will sign a cooperation agreement in the field of health and medicine with his Chinese counterpart, Prof. Chen Minzhan.

The accord will allow the two health ministries to cooperate in epidemiology of diseases, quality of health services, prevention of infectious diseases, organ transplants, and research in the fields of immunology, oncology and neurology. He will visit Chinese hospitals, the Beijing University School of Traditional Medicine and the Beijing Research Institute for Biological Substances. He will also tour a pharmaceutical company in Shanghai and promote markets for Israeli medical industries.

Judy Siegel

MDA head attends Tunis meet

Magen David Adom president Dr. Shlomi Antebbe is in Tunis today to attend the Middle Eastern conference of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Antebbe was invited to the three-day event by the Red Crescent Society of Tunisia.

The Tunisian prime minister will be guest of honor at the conference, which will be attended by representatives of the societies in Mediterranean countries, including Arab lands.

They will discuss lifesaving, human rights, health promotion and increased cooperation among national rescue organizations. MDA is struggling to become a full-fledged member of the International Red Cross. The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Dr. Fathi Arafat, has promised to help.

Judy Siegel

Scientists aim to bring African tree here

Ben-Gurion University researchers are working with African scientists to acclimate the Zachum tree - which contains a very high percentage of edible oil - to the Negev. The researchers believe that the tree, which is native to central Africa, has great economic potential.

This was disclosed at an international workshop on agricultural development in arid regions organized by BGU. Dr. Ze'ev Weisman said the zachum tree is valuable because it produces chemical compounds that serve as a source of hormones and steroids. It was in ancient times used for ritual and nutritional purposes and can be used in the pharmaceutical industry here, he said. The first plot of zachum trees was planted this week at Sde Teiman near Beersheba.

Judy Siegel

Greece sponsoring festival on Jewish life

There is to be a festival in Greece on June 29 to celebrate Jewish life there, with festivities to include concerts by Thessaloniki and Israeli composers, Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreu announced recently.

A monument will also be unveiled honoring Greek Jews who perished under Nazi occupation. Representatives from Israel and world Jewish organizations are expected to attend.

Jerusalem Post Staff

Hussein honored by Arab-Israeli youth group

Jordan's King Hussein was honored in New York by Seeds of Peace, a program to bring Arab and Israeli teenagers together to learn about their different cultures and to work for peace.

"Some say we are moving too fast, and my response is we are moving too slow," Hussein told the black-tie audience Monday night.

"We have a lot of time that we must make up for, lost time... Let's give these young people the opportunity we never had, give them peace," he said at the Rainbow Room in New York City.

Seeds of Peace, founded five years ago, brings Arab and Israeli teenagers together for summer camp every year to promote understanding.

AP

TAU hawk caught in Lebanon

A hawk belonging to Tel Aviv University was captured in south Lebanon after it was shot near a village in the central sector of the security zone, according to a Lebanese newspaper. The paper accused Israel of "not only sending warplanes into Lebanese airspace everyday, but of now sending attack birds."

The hawk, which was flying with two other large birds, was found with metal ring on its leg with a tag reading "Tel Aviv University I-2107."

Iim

Blair hits UK campaign trail

By ALAN WHEATLEY

NORTHAMPTON, England (Reuters) - Opposition leader Tony Blair, formally launching his campaign for the May 1 election, spoke yesterday of the responsibility and humility he felt at being hot favorite to be Britain's next prime minister.

Speaking to reporters aboard Labor's "battle bus" on the way to Northampton, Blair said he was excited the campaign was finally under way after months of shadow-boxing.

"I feel the responsibility. It is in some ways quite a humbling experience because all those hopes and aspirations are vested in us," said Blair.

Labor leads Prime Minister John Major's Conservatives in opinion polls by about 20 percentage points.

"But there's also a sense of excitement, of what we can achieve, of what we can do. The whole of my political life has been a preparation, if you like, for this period of time."

"I came into politics as a doer, not a seer. For 13 to 14 years - all my adult life in politics - I've been in opposition and we're anxious to start doing," he said.

Blair, accompanied by his wife Cherie and a handful of close aides, again warned his party, in opposition for 18 years, not to be lulled into complacency by the polls.

The Conservatives, he said, would try to "terrify people about the Labor Party" in the run-up to polling day, and Labor had to respond by putting across its own positive message.

Although Blair is keen to campaign on what he sees as the key issues of education and modernizing Britain's economy, he accepts that to some extent voters will make their minds up on the personalities of the party leaders.

Asked what sort of person he was, Blair answered: "I hope I've been very straight with people about what we can deliver."

"All the way through I've been



British Labor Party leader Tony Blair and his wife, Cherie, prepare to board his election 'battle bus' in London yesterday. (AP)

saying I don't promise a revolution, I don't say I can wave a magic wand and put the world to rights."

The first two weeks of the campaign since Major called the election have been relatively low-key, with the spotlight on so-called sleaze in the Conservative Party.

But the Conservatives and Labor launch their manifestos this week and Blair began his "meet the people" tour yesterday.

Labor has set up a high-tech campaign headquarters a stone's throw

from parliament, but Blair's bus, taking him on a tour of 60 towns and cities, is largely a throwback to the old days.

The only concessions to modern electioneering are a mobile fax machine and a telephone conferencing facility. A "people's platform" will unfold from the rear of the coach to give Blair a place from which to make speeches.

The cramped coach, painted with the Union Jack flag on its roof, has been paid for by the

media which have had to stump up \$12,250 for a seat on two accompanying press buses.

The press buses of the Conservatives and minority Liberal Democrats are also self-financing.

Labor strategists have a minutely prepared schedule of campaign stops for the next month, with fall-back plans in case last-minute changes have to be made.

In between meetings, Blair intends to concentrate on interviews with local and regional

media, which aides believe exert enormous influence in election campaigns.

Blair says he does not feel stressed, but admits the next four weeks will be tough.

Yet he adds: "We are conscious the whole time that if we are elected, that's when the tough work begins. If we are successful in persuading people, May 2 is the date when we've got to get on with the business of delivering what we promised to do."

Sudan rebels gain ground in north

NAIROBI (Reuters) - Sudanese rebel leader John Garang said yesterday rebels seized four districts in northeast Sudan in an offensive aimed at cutting Khartoum's main link with the outside world.

He said a coalition of rebels "liberated" the districts of Karora, Itairba, Agiti and Agiti last week and over the weekend were advancing towards the town of Tokar.

Garang, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and military commander of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), said NDA forces were destroying Khartoum's "military and security machine" in the northeast.

In Khartoum, the army journal *al-Nasr* said yesterday that independent militias killed 70

SPLA guerrillas and captured 18 in an attack on the rebels near Akobo on the Ethiopian border in the south Monday.

The rebels say the northeast offensive is aimed at cutting the road between Khartoum and Port Sudan on the Red Sea. Tokar is 150 km southeast of Port Sudan, the main link for Africa's largest country to the rest of the world.

Sudanese officials said Monday that government forces were fighting Eritrean and Ethiopian troops that had taken control of border areas in Red Sea state in the northeast.

The government-owned *Sudan al-Hadith* newspaper quoted Red Sea state governor Badawi al-Khair Idris as saying the Eritreans had looted property, imprisoned local leaders and killed a 70-year-old religious figure. There

was no independent confirmation of the report. Eritrea, Ethiopia and the rebels have denied accusations from Khartoum since January that Eritrean and Ethiopian troops were fighting alongside rebel forces in the east and northeast.

Northern rebels of the NDA opposition coalition based in Eritrea attacked the army on the Sudanese side of the border with Eritrea in January but failed to capture much territory.

Rebel units further south, led by the southern-based SPLA, captured the Sudanese towns of Kurmuk and Qeissan on the Ethiopian border in an attack coordinated with the northerners.

The SPLA has been fighting since 1983 for greater autonomy or independence for the Christian and animist south from the Moslem north.

Algerian army kills 20 Islamic rebels

PARIS (Reuters) - Algerian soldiers killed more than 20 Moslem rebels in a huge search operation in the northeastern province of Tizi-Ouzou, an Algerian newspaper said yesterday.

The troops ringed Sidi Ali Bounab forest near Tizi-Ouzou, 50 km east of Algiers, and killed the rebels in the night between Saturday and Sunday, said *Watan* newspaper. On Monday the troops were besieging an unspecified number of Moslem rebels holed up in a cave in the same area, the newspaper said.

Algerian security forces have been carrying out search operations against guerrillas ahead of the June 5 parliamentary elections.

More than 200 Moslem rebels have been killed in such operations. The dead include some leaders killed in Algiers last month in security force raids on their hideouts.

NY, NJ take Ellis Island fight to high court

WASHINGTON (AP) - The right to claim ownership of Ellis Island - the gateway for millions of immigrants to the United States - is at stake as the Supreme Court receives recommendations for resolving a lingering dispute between the states of New York and New Jersey.

Former law professor Paul Verkuil, the court-appointed specialist in the case, was expected to issue a 170-page report this

week outlining his proposal for determining which state "owns" the island.

The nine justices can accept or reject the plan. As a first step, they are likely to order lawyers for both states to respond to the report. After that, both sides will be ordered to argue the case before the justices during the court term that begins in October.

The submission of Verkuil's report follows a lengthy fact-finding

process in which a 23-day trial was conducted last summer. Court officials said they believe the proceeding was the first trial ever held in the 52-year-old Supreme Court building.

New Jersey officials say at least part of Ellis Island is located in their state. New York officials say that's not so and claim the 25.7 acre island in New York Harbor.

The two states signed an 1834 agreement, when Ellis Island was only three acres. New York was given the above-water land, and the submerged portions west of the middle of the harbor were given to New Jersey. Landfill projects have added greatly to the island's size. The Clinton administration says the dispute isn't worth the court's time.

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הכרזת האכל

Spain trainwrecks kill 21

By MATT SPETALNICK

MADRID (Reuters) — Twenty-one people died in two train wrecks on the outskirts of Madrid and in northern Spain yesterday.

Investigators combing through the twisted wreckage at both crash sites — 280 km apart — ruled out sabotage, but the accidents raised new questions about the safety of Spain's national rail system.

Authorities continued the grim task of identifying mangled bodies pulled from the "Miguel de Unamuno" passenger train, which derailed overnight in the northern town of Huarte Araquil in Spain's worst train disaster in nearly two decades.

"Some bodies were completely destroyed, so it is very difficult to identify them," Navarre regional president Miguel Sanz told reporters.

Relatives who kept a vigil at local hospitals were overcome with grief to learn their loved ones were among the dead. "Why did this have to happen to me?" wailed one mother over the loss of her young son.

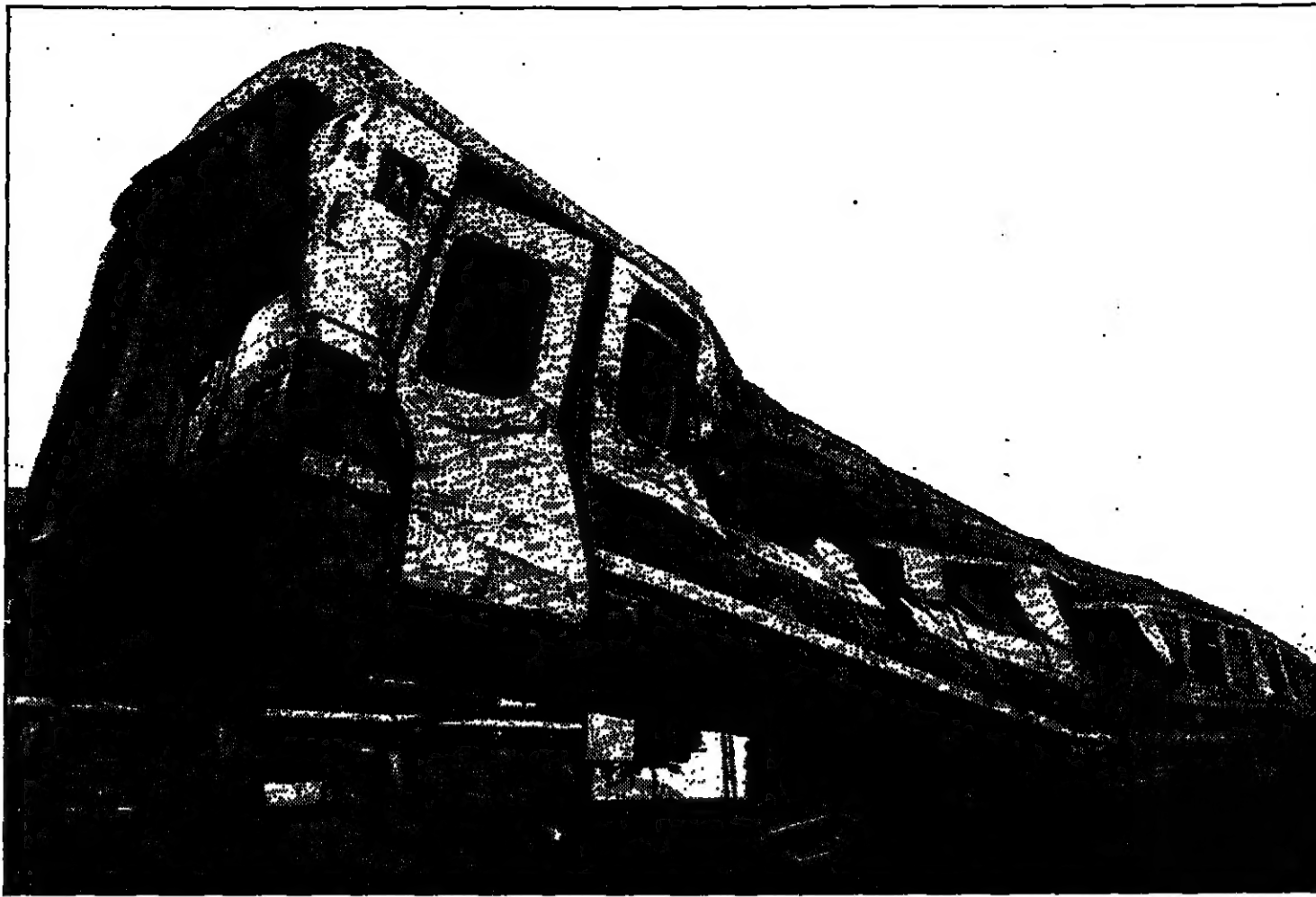
The train was crowded with families returning home from a long Easter holiday weekend. Ninety-four of the 248 passengers were injured in the crash, 18 of them seriously.

People trapped in the wreckage screamed for help, and rescue crews scoured the debris for the last of the victims.

Officials of the Spanish rail company RENFE said "excessive speed" was the likely cause of the crash. They said the train approached the station at 137 km per hour when it should have slowed down to 30 km per hour.

Less than 10 hours after the Huarte Araquil crash, a train traveling from Barcelona to Malaga with 54 passengers on board derailed while changing tracks near Azuqueca de Henares, about 30 km northeast of Madrid.

A train engineer was pronounced dead at the scene, and a French woman passenger died on the way



The wreckage of the first of two Spanish train crashes lies at the side of the rail lines in northern Spain yesterday. (AP)

to a local hospital, officials said. Twenty-two people were injured, the Red Cross reported. The cause of the derailment was under investigation.

Spanish television stations flashed back and forth between the two crash sites with live broadcasts, and government officials sought to calm the public's fears.

"Trains are the safest mode of transportation (despite) the dramatic events that have occurred in less than 10 hours," Deputy Prime

Minister Francisco Alvarez Cascos told state-run radio.

In the first accident, three of four carriages of a train traveling from Barcelona to Iran on Spain's border with France tumbled off the track in Navarre province about 32 km northwest of Pamplona.

There were moments of sheer terror in the overturned carriages as passengers struggled to crawl out from beneath piles of shattered glass, baggage and broken seats. "The people inside were screaming.

It was horrifying," one woman passenger told reporters.

"I was thrown from my seat, and luggage went flying through the air," said Maribel Burgui, who was traveling with her husband and son. She called it a "great miracle" that they all survived.

Cranes were brought in to help search for victims. Rescue workers at first had to leave many of the bodies alongside the tracks draped in blankets. A makeshift mortuary was set up in a nearby park, and many of

the bodies were later taken to Pamplona for identification.

The Navarre regional government said 19 people were killed, ranging in age from 13 to 64.

The Huarte Araquil derailment was Spain's deadliest train crash since 1980 when 27 people were killed in the province of Valencia.

Spain's King Juan Carlos expressed his condolences to the victims' families, and Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar pledged to provide whatever assistance was needed.



Albanian rebels fire into the air at a roadblock near the southern town of Vlore yesterday. (AP)

No longer chic to be Shik as Albania disbands secret police

TIRANA (Reuters) — Albanian Prime Minister Bashkim Fino went to the rebel-held south yesterday for the first time since insurgents seized the region and told their leaders the dreaded Shik secret police had been disbanded.

"Since yesterday, there is no more Shik in Albania," he told rebels at a meeting in the southern town of Gjirokastra, 30 km from the Greek border.

"We are going to build a new intelligence service, with a new face," Fino said. "From now, anyone who identifies himself as a Shik officer is a liar." Fino said he met President Sali Berisha Monday and they accepted the resignations of Shik chief Bashkim Gazidede and his deputy Bujar Rama. The finance ministry had stopped funding for the group from Monday, he said.

Shik, the National Information Service, was set up in 1991 after a Stalinist regime which had ruled the Balkan country for 45 years collapsed.

Shik replaced the sinister Sigurimi secret police which had helped impose communist rule but became equally feared in its own right. Gazidede's resignation has been a main demand of the rebels who seized southern Albania in early March.

Fino arrived by helicopter in Gjirokastra and was greeted warmly by rebels bristling with guns, local reporters said. A former Socialist mayor in Gjirokastra, he also shook hands with Gjoleke Malaj, the rebel boss in Tepelene to the north.

He told reporters he was in the region to meet the "legal representa-

tives of local power and public order," but quickly moved to discussions with rebels.

Elected officials have remained in

the region but the south has been run by rebel Committees of Public Salvation since the army was driven out in early March.

Iran gets bleak UN rights report

GENEVA (AP) — There are tentative signs that women are gaining a greater say in public life in Iran, despite a further clampdown on the way they dress, according to a new UN report.

Overall, the human rights situation there remains bleak, with an increase in the number of executions; widespread use of torture; and repression of religious dissidents and minorities, said the report issued yesterday.

"Human rights require urgent and sustained attention," said Canadian expert Maurice Copithorne in his submission on Iran to the UN Human Rights Commission.

Iran's record is considered at the 53-nation commission under a procedure reserved for serious offenders.

UN reports on Iran have long included concerns about the Islamic Republic's strict treatment of women.

On this, Copithorne said there were mixed signals, reflecting the split between moderates and hard liners.

On the one hand, there appeared to be clampdown on women violating the strict code of dress by "improper veiling," he said.

But on the other hand, more women were taking up public office and speaking out, he said.

Copithorne cited the recent elec-

tion of a woman as district mayor in the capital Tehran; articles by clerics in women's magazines advocating a change in the government attitude to women; and revised laws on family allowances for working women and better maternity leave.

Iran refused to let Copithorne into the country.

WORLD

in brief

Turk injured in German blaze, swastika found

FRANKFURT (Reuters) — A Turkish man was injured after a fire broke out at his home in the central German town of Haigerseelbach yesterday and investigators were not ruling out the possibility of a racist attack, police said.

The 29-year-old man injured his hands and legs after jumping out of a first-floor window.

The cause of the fire was not clear but police said they had found a swastika Nazi symbol spray-painted on the back of the building.

Egypt ruling party supporters die in accident

CAIRO (AP) — Nine people were killed and eight wounded when the minibus they were traveling in slammed into a truck in southern Egypt, police officials said yesterday.

The accident occurred Monday night as the minibus was returning to Cairo from a pro-government rally in the village of el-Wanas in the southern province of Aswan, about 800 kilometers from Cairo.

The victims were supporters of Zain el-Abedin Sayed, a candidate of President Hosni Mubarak's ruling National Democratic Party who is running for a seat on the local council of the Aswan province. Elections begin April 8.

UN approves Filipino Gulf War victims claims

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The United Nations approved war compensation for 550 Filipinos displaced from their jobs when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. The claims are to be shouldered by Iraq using proceeds from limited oil sales allowed under a UN-monitored program. The victims, mostly workers in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, are to receive between \$2,000 and \$4,000 each, depending on the damage they suffered. Earlier, 47 Filipinos were indemnified through the UN commission on war claims. Thousands of Filipinos lost their jobs when their government ordered them evacuated from Kuwait, Iraq and parts of Saudi Arabia affected by the Gulf War.

Brazil police filmed torturing, murdering

SAO PAULO (AP) — Dramatic amateur video footage shown on television captures Brazilian state police torturing and murdering a number of men, shooting two and killing one.

The videos show 10 policemen attempting to extort money from suspicious drivers to let them pass through a road block in the Diadema district, an industrial suburb on the outskirts of Sao Paulo. Footage shows police beating a man for eight minutes before taking him behind a wall. Minutes later a shot can be heard. In other footage, police administered 34 blows to one man's feet and back with night sticks over a period of three minutes before letting him and two others return to their car. As the car pulled away, an officer fired two shots at the car, killing Mario Jose Josinho, who was riding in the back seat.

Six dead after Tibetan boat capsizes

BEIJING (AP) — A cowhide boat capsized in a Tibetan river, leaving six people dead and 17 others missing and presumed drowned, according to a report in a Tibetan newspaper that reached Beijing yesterday. The accident occurred when villagers were planting trees on an island in the river. A boat sprung a leak, causing it to capsize after passengers panicked.

Saddam clone? One is enough

CAIRO (AP) — In a front-page April Fool's Day story, the London-based *Al-Hayat* newspaper reported doctors cloned Uday Hussein and are planning to use the clone's organs to treat Saddam's wounded heir apparent. Uday, the Iraqi leader's eldest son, was wounded in a December assassination attempt. The newspaper reported that if the Uday experiment works out, Saddam may be the next subject for cloning.

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Break the cycle

While pundits and diplomats continued to debate whether Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat recently gave a "green light" to terrorism, two massive explosions almost killed dozens of Israeli schoolchildren in Gaza yesterday. Arafat can no longer shirk responsibility for arguing, as he did in the case of the recent suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, that the bomber came from Israeli-controlled territory. This near-massacre occurred in heart of the Gaza Strip, an area under Arafat's full control.

Rather than breathe a sigh of relief that no one except the suicide bombers were killed in yesterday's bombings, the US should act as if the worst had occurred — because it still will. While the US is undoubtedly attempting to ensure Arafat reins in terror, there are disturbing signs that the US regards the threat of Palestinian terrorism as inevitable so long as Israel insists on building a Jewish neighborhood on Jerusalem's Har Homa in Jerusalem.

According to yesterday's *Ha'aretz*, senior American officials believe that Arafat has "no interest" in improving rocky security ties with Israel. One of these officials reportedly speculated that this lack of cooperation was a means of pressuring Israel to freeze the building on Har Homa.

Translation: The US has vetoed two UN Security Council resolutions condemning Israel, and is talking tough to Arafat privately — but don't expect the US to press Arafat further until Israel calls the bulldozers off.

At the same time, the US is reportedly proposing a "package deal" that includes a "special emphasis" on fighting terror, a freeze on Har Homa construction, an Israeli promise to eschew controversial unilateral actions, accelerated negotiations on the outstanding interim agreement issues (safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, the Gaza port and so on), and Netanyahu's proposal for speeding up the final-status talks.

The problem here is that Israel is being sold the same bridge, over and over again. The Palestinians first agreed to renounce violence as a condition for mutual recognition in the 1993 Declaration of Principles. The Palestinians have reiterated this commitment in greater detail at each subsequent stage of the Oslo process: the 1994 Gaza-Jericho Accord, the 1995 Cairo Agreement, and the interim agreement signed one month later in Washington.

This commitment was made again just 11 weeks ago in the Hebron agreement. Then, Israel was told, the reason the Palestinians were threatening violence was the fear that Netanyahu was trying to ditch Oslo altogether.

Now that Netanyahu is slavishly abiding by Oslo, the threat is renewed again because he is taking "unilateral actions" which the Palestinians have unilaterally decided are in violation of the agreement.

For good measure, the foreign ministers of the Arab League pile on and call for freezing all normalization with Israel. All this, Israel is to understand, is the reward for fulfilling Oslo so completely that Netanyahu has become the left wing of his own cabinet.

If this is what Israel gets for playing by the rules, who is to say that the next time the Palestinians do not get what they want, when they want it, that bombs will not begin to explode near schoolbuses and in busy cafes?

The US — belatedly — stepped up pressure on Arafat to take concrete steps to combat the Palestinian groups that are carrying out terrorist attacks — and Arafat evidently took action to ensure that Land Day passed relatively peacefully. And the US did veto the back-to-back anti-Israel resolutions in the Security Council.

On a more fundamental level, however, the whisperings of unnamed officials and the shape of the package deal indicate that the US is not seriously attempting to tackle the cycle of violent blackmail that has become part and parcel of the peace process.

The only way to break this cycle is for the US to act upon its own statements that violence and terror have no place in the peace process; in short, it must refuse to link Palestinian implementation of their unimpeachable commitment to combat violence with new Israeli concessions.

Blowing up innocent people and building a neighborhood are neither legally nor morally equivalent. Arafat's refusal to crack down on terrorism violates Oslo, while Israel building on Har Homa does not. And the Palestinians have no right to burst the bounds of Oslo while Israel scrupulously stays within it.

The US, as Oslo's "sheriff," cannot allow Oslo to be constantly rewritten midstream by equating blatant violations of Oslo with actions that, however objectionable to the other side, are within Israel's rights under the agreement.

If Israel is being asked to go beyond Oslo and end all building in half of Jerusalem, not to mention Judea and Samaria, the Palestinians must also go beyond Oslo in safeguarding Israel's security and promoting peace with Israel in the Arab world. One can only imagine what a boost the peace process would enjoy if such a deal were struck and implemented.

Instead, in a deadly brew for the peace process, Israel is being asked to unilaterally abide by Oslo-plus, while the Palestinians feel free to act as if they had signed Oslo-minus.



An unholy alliance

While it is true that the Palestinians and the Egyptians are exerting themselves in every local and international forum to drum up support for biting anti-Israel resolutions, this doesn't preclude our total isolation.

But there is a danger in such resolutions. They may delude Palestinians and other Arabs into seeing a shunned Israel as an easy target for military adventurism.

The events of summer 1973 are a case in point: It was repeated calls at international congresses to punish Israel that firmed up Egypt's decision to start the Yom Kippur War.

One might remember, however, that a decade later the Knesset's Golan Law prompted the UN General Assembly to call on its members "to isolate Israel" (a resolution that remained a dead letter).

The anti-Israel resolution that characterized the UN throughout the 1980s called for a freeze on aid and on buying arms from Israel, a sundering of economic and cultural links, and a rupture of diplomatic ties "in order to isolate Israel completely."

But people have short memories, and it escaped notice that, by the mid-'90s, this uncompromising UN stance had softened.

It could hardly have been otherwise, seeing that Israel had meanwhile signed a memorandum of strategic understanding with the US, and received billions in US military aid.

Even Moscow, which voted for isolating Israel, renewed ties and allowed hundreds of thousands of Jews to make aliyah and strengthen the country.

THE ritual in which Arab condemnations of Israel are eagerly collected like stamps has been going on since anyone can remember, and needn't cause undue panic. It didn't start with

MOSHE ZAK

Har Homa, and it won't end with it. Har Homa is just a milestone in our drawn-out struggle with the Palestinians for Jerusalem, and for this country.

The problem is stopping the drama from rising out of control and becoming the rationale for military or terrorist adventurism. Last June, with Har Homa still

The most outrageous thing to emerge from Rabat was the Arabs' call for Christians and Moslems to unite against Jews.

off in the future, the Arab leaders convened in Cairo, and, ignoring President Clinton's plea that they give the new Netanyahu government a chance, greeted it with a series of anti-Israel resolutions.

One of these was a call for "uprooting settlements, including those in East Jerusalem," totally brushing aside the Oslo agreement, which accepted their existence even after the Palestinian Authority was set up. Worse, operative decisions were taken on freezing relations with Israel (these weren't made public, so as not to annoy the Americans).

Their effect became apparent later, after Western diplomats, including the Americans, praised the Egyptians for their "maneuvering ability" and success in "moderating the decisions of the Arab summit."

Compliments were out of place then, and they were equally misplaced last month, following the

"Jerusalem Committee" convened by King Hassan in Rabat, Morocco.

In its wake, Clinton called on the Arabs to act with restraint, to avoid breaking off relations with Israel and worsening the conflict. In Rabat, special envoy Dennis Ross received soothing assurances from the Arabs. But they were worthless.

To deceive the Americans, the gathering's outrageous resolutions — which amounted to a formalized saber-ranting — were hidden under a cloak of moderation and publicized very selectively, via France's AFP news agency. But everything came clear 48 hours later, when their full text became known.

It is doubtful whether the resolution calling on Moslem countries to reassess their ties with Israel will cause the closure of interest sections in Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Qatar and Oman. The call, a recurring leitmotif, was repeated by the conference of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on Sunday.

The real point of the Rabat conference is not whether relations will be frozen. It is the call that was issued to the Vatican and the Eastern churches, asking them to create a common front in the face of attempts to Judaize Jerusalem.

This provocative call for Christian cross and Islamic scimitar to join against Israel is a departure from accepted international norms, and must concern all who desire world peace.

Whatever results from it, Yasser Arafat for one will have a problem implementing the resolution he initiated in Cairo — a return to the Arab boycott.

Is he really prepared to do without the PA's economic aid from Israel?

The writer, a veteran journalist, comments on current affairs.

Knots in time

YEHEZKEL DROR

Alexander Solzhenitsyn has referred to historic events as "knots" in time. This is the image that should shape our thinking vis-a-vis the Palestinians, instead of deluding ourselves that a "permanent agreement" will end the conflict once and for all.

With the deep "drivers" of history bringing turbulent change to the region — demographic transformation, economic development, the import of high technology, the influx of Western culture, and the resulting search for new self-identities — explosive transformations will lead us, willy nilly, into a largely unknowable and partly inconceivable future.

Given such dynamics, can we hope to "freeze" history, to "put an end" to it? We need a sort of hyper-Heraclitean perspective, one which recognizes that not only can we never bathe twice in the same river, but that what was a river when we got into it may easily become a volcano while we are still bathing.

A well-designed permanent agreement based on understanding underlying historic processes can help channel change, but it cannot prevent profound transformation, dense with uncertainty.

The Palestinian quasi-state is, among other things, likely to be unsatisfied, scarcely viable, dense with frustration, and loaded with explosive energy, making it radical compared with other Arab states. Hence the high probability of disruptive scenarios like the destabilization of Jordan, which would in turn impact seriously on Saudi Arabia.

By accelerating modernization, the Palestinian semi-state could fill a positive, long-term historical role; but our choosing to ignore the certainty of radical change can only produce policy fiascos.

RATHER than allowing itself to become fixated on single acts,

The permanent agreement may influence the flow of history — but that's all that's permanent about it

events and agreements, Israel must construct "knots" based on long-term strategic thinking, directed at channeling "jumpy" processes.

To borrow a term from chess strategy, we need to think in terms of sets of moves and counter-moves, rather than single moves.

In deciding which kind of permanent agreement with the Palestinians might best conform with Israeli values and interests in the long run, we must focus ahead 20 and 30 years on the region's evolutionary potential.

For example, we must ask: What steps in Jerusalem will strengthen the city's status as the undivided capital of Israel in the long term? Some short-term moves may look impressive, when all they achieve is to escalate Arab and Islamic readiness to contest Israel's sovereignty over the city.

Similarly, refusing the status of "state" to the Palestinian entity — subject to strict limitations — cannot prevent it from becoming a "state" recognized by many countries, whatever the permanent agreement says.

It may thus be better for Israel to ride on the back of irresistible streams of history rather than to be carried away by them; in other words, to grant the Palestinian entity statehood in return for acceptance of Israeli demands.

Demographic processes too care little about agreements.

Gaza's continuing population explosion, combined with unyielding unemployment, raises the possibility of the Palestinian entity resisting migration from Gaza to Judea and Samaria. Israel may well have to decide on its attitude to such a policy, and on ways to enforce that attitude, quite independently from what the permanent agreement may say.

Perhaps most important, likely Palestinian efforts to destabilize Jordan will require an Israeli policy that either accepts this possibility and tries to reap benefit from it, or one that resists it forcefully.

Either option will have a crucial impact on the future of the Middle East, again quite independent of what might be written in the permanent agreement.

In short: Only a dynamic, long-range view will serve the long-term interests of Israel, and the West, in a region condemned to turbulent transformation.

The so-called permanent agreement is important, but it is no more than a knot in time.

The writer, professor of political science emeritus at the Hebrew University, is a policy planner and strategic adviser.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ISOLATED

Sir, — The arrogance of the nation is unbelievable. First they push Israel into a corner, through repeated and biased criticism. They continually excuse Israel's enemies for violations and atrocities, while condemning Israel for infinitely less. Then, when their venom has finally sunk in and helped isolate Israel internationally, they blame Israel for being alone in the world.

The adage "A good Jew is a dead Jew" — or at least a humiliated and broken Jew — appears to hold true today. Israel is condescendingly offered a little sympathy after a massacre or terror attack, but this quickly dissipates, making room once again for the Israel-bashing with which we have become so familiar.

Even in the days of Shimon Peres's government the BBC and other world media did not become sudden admirers of Israel, despite the fact Peres showed a greater inclination to surrender to Arab demands than had any previous

Israeli government. As Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's media adviser, David Bar-Ilan, reminded CNN on March 26, early last year Israel faced the same type of murderous violence it does now, and then there was no building at Har Homa — the alleged justification for the current unrest and last week's Tel Aviv bombing.

Even the Labor government's concessions did not help Israel much in the courtroom of world opinion. Most politicians and journalists took the side of the Arabs then too. Only as long as Israel was prepared to surrender its interests unilaterally for the sake of placating the Arabs, would they and the nations of the world grant partial acceptance to Israel.

Let's look back to before World War II. What was the reason for anti-Jewish sentiment and actions then? There was no Israel then, no "occupation," no "settlements," no Har Homa. Yet no nation represented at the 1938 Evian

Conference was willing to offer refuge to desperate Jews as the Holocaust loomed.

Only after the terrible massacre of six million did the nations finally — for a few years — put aside their inbuilt bias against the Jewish people and allow them to establish a state in half of their historic land.

As Golda Meir once said, every nation in the world has a bloc to which it relates — the US to Western nations in general; a European nation to the European bloc; a South American nation to the South American bloc; a Moslem nation to the Moslem bloc; a socialist nation to the socialist bloc; a Third World nation to the Third World bloc. Only Israel stands completely alone, with hardly a single true friend.

And if that isn't bad enough, Israel is blamed for being isolated. JAN WILLEM VAN DER HOEVEN

Jerusalem.

ARAB RHETORIC

the Australian Christian who set fire to the interior of Al-Aksa Mosque on August 29, 1996?

Was it Palestinian "rhetoric" that converted the Western Wall tunnel exit to the Via Dolorosa into a construction which physically threatened Al-Aksa and the Dome of the Rock? That "rhetoric" fueled the violence which marked its opening.

Is it "rhetoric" inspiring the stone throwers and rioters to the mayhem over the Har Homa construction — undoubtedly legitimate construction under the provisions of the Oslo agreements? Is it Palestinian leadership "rhetoric" that brands the bul-

dozers at Har Homa as terrorist? (On March 25, Marwan Barghout, secretary-general of Fatah, told IMRA the peaceful demonstrations called included throwing stones: "It is peaceful to throw stones.")

What is "rhetoric" and what is deliberate incitement? Arab "rhetoric" is a fundamental barrier to peace and normalization.

JOSEPH LERNER, Co-director, IMRA (Independent Media Review and Analysis)

Jerusalem.

CRUCIFIXION

Sir, — On March 20 you published a photograph of a Palestinian staging a mock crucifixion. When these people learn to live by the teachings of Jesus, who said love your neighbor, do good to those who hate you, bless those who persecute you and

turn the other cheek, and are persecuted for these beliefs, then they can legitimately identify themselves with his crucifixion. Instead, they threaten violence every time they perceive a problem.

This use of Christianity's most

sacred symbol is a desecration and shows to what length the Palestinians are willing to go to "work the media," stir up antisemitism by inference and distort the issue.

KATHERINE SNYDER

Jerusalem.

On transcending tribalism

MICHAEL LERNER

would be different in our Jewish life if they became the seat of the capital of a Palestinian state living at peace with Israel.

There are tens of thousands of Palestinians living in the expanded East Jerusalem, and very few of them are willing to be part of a Jewish state.

THE Oslo accords sought to finesse Palestinian concerns by

Netanyahu is derailing more than the peace process

leaving Jerusalem last to be negotiated after everything else had been settled. Israel imagined that if Palestinians were offered a full-bodied autonomous reality that might soon evolve into a state, Arafat's crew might be talked into an arrangement that gave them a symbolic presence.

While Israel would retain military control, Jerusalem could become capital of both states, and this example of power-sharing would fulfill the biblical promise of Jews being "a light unto the nations."

Netanyahu's genius was to recognize that if he placed this issue on the front burner by beginning to expropriate Arab land in East Jerusalem, he could touch a powerful nerve of Palestinians who have suspected all along that the peace process is really just another method to extend occupation. Grabbing Arab land has always been the name of the Zionist game, according to Palestinian perceptions.

The second victor, of course, is Hamas. No longer constrained by Palestinian public opinion that condemned last year's bus bombings and hoped that Israel would

honor its promise to leave the West Bank, the Islamic fundamentalists feel freed by Netanyahu's undermining of mutual confidence to return to their (disgusting and unjustified) terror against Israeli citizens.

That, too, plays into Netanyahu's grand strategy, recreating fear and making it even more difficult for the Labor Party to find the courage to question whether it really serves Israeli strategic and defense interests to insist on control over East Jerusalem.

Netanyahu is derailing far more than the peace process. As their US Jewish elders rally round the flag and proclaim that they would sacrifice peace for the sake of a "United Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people," increasing numbers of younger Jews wonder why they should stay loyal to a Judaism that seems indistinguishable from blind nationalism.

For those of us who know the Torah insists that every human being is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with love and caring (hence, its warning that "When you come into your land, do not oppress the stranger; remember that you were strangers in the land of Egypt") Netanyahu's undermining of the peace process is a tragedy because Judaism's future depends on transcending a narrow tribalism that was raised against by our prophets.

The image of Jerusalem as a city of peace and an international city ("For My house shall become a house for all peoples") is very far from the stingy nationalist whinnings that have led Netanyahu to use this moment to extend Jewish power by building a Jewish settlement in Palestinian East Jerusalem.

The writer is editor of Tikkan magazine and rabbi of Congregation Bnei Tikkan in San Francisco. (Los Angeles Times)

GRAPEVINE

Poetic license

By GREER FAY CASIMAN

PC initially stood for personal computer. Then it entered another milieu and became the abbreviation for politically correct. On Saturday night, at the well-attended opening of the Fourth International Poets Festival in Jerusalem, it entered yet another field when Yehuda Amichai termed it "poetically correct." But events of the day made it impossible for poet and political activist Dahlia Ravikovitch to remain within the new definition of PC. After reading the Hebrew translation of a poem by American poet Stanley Moss, Ravikovitch remained on stage to express condolences to the family of Abdullah Salah, the Palestinian engineering student killed earlier in the day near Ramallah. To avoid any anticipated criticism, Ravikovitch exercised poetic license, declaring her statement to be "not political but humane."



Kevin Costner

CULTURAL ATTACHES were much more in evidence than heads of diplomatic missions at the Poets Festival. A notable exception was South African Ambassador Frank Land, accompanied by his elegant and vivacious wife Maatchien, who having just returned from a trip to South Africa, pronounced herself very pleased to be here. "This is my home for the next four years, and I'm glad to be back," she said.

HONORED BY Herzog

Hospital for their devoted commitment since 1969 when they first met the late Rabbani.

Sarah Herzog, Burton and Anne Greenblatt of Teaneck, New Jersey, brought many of their relatives from the US to Jerusalem to join them at the festive dinner marking the hospital's 102nd anniversary. Guest speaker Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, who has been closely linked to the hospital since his days as health minister and who never misses an opportunity to put in a plug for his city, noted that the Greenblatts had reminded him that a year ago, when he spoke to Jewish audiences in Englewood, N.J., he had promised that Jerusalem will remain "united and undivided as the sole capital of Israel and the Jewish people." Olmert saw no reason not to reiterate that promise, and repeated it to loud acclamation.

IS THERE something that Brazilian Ambassador Pedro Paulo Assumpcao knows that the rest of

us don't? Invitations for the cocktail reception he is hosting this evening state that the event is "in honor of the President of the Labor Party and MIK Shimon Peres." Wow, that was a rapid development!

NO ONE WAS more delighted than his wife Jill, when Martin Indyk was appointed US ambassador to Israel. Indyk had been so over-worked in Washington that his family seldom got to see him. They thought that this would be remedied in Israel. But given the turn of political events in the Middle East, they saw even less of him here. Now that there are reports he's being posted back to Washington to take over as undersecretary of state for the Middle East, there may be a brief respite from the constant round of meetings.

But then again, with crisis situations threatening to develop, their main contact with him may be via e-mail.



Sylvester Stallone

IT'S LONG been an annual tradition for veteran social columnist Mira Avreth to host a Purim fancy dress party to which she invites many of the celebrities that she writes about the rest of the year. Her theme this time was jogging, which explains why some of the guests who later turned up at the party of Likud activist and business entrepreneur David Appel were dressed in track suits.

ARRIVING

"With a group of friends at Hollywood's trendy Sky Bar, Sharon Stone found her path blocked by the doorman. 'Do you know who I am?' she fumed.

"I'm Sharon Stone." As it happens, he did know, but wasn't impressed. In his business, one star more or less doesn't make much difference.

JUST A few months back, Sylvester Stallone, 50, became a new father. Now, he's also become a new big brother. His 77-year-old father, who is married to a woman 47 years his junior, has fathered a baby boy.

FATHERHOOD HAS also intruded into the life of Kevin Costner. The 42-year-old actor has three grown children born in wedlock, and now a fourth conceived during a short-lived romance. Bridgette Rooney, the infant's mother, has plenty of money with which to support herself and her baby and didn't ask Costner to share the costs. All she wanted from him was an acknowledgment of paternity, which he reluctantly gave after undergoing DNA testing.

Although the focus of recent Nazi-era financial dealings has been on Switzerland's half-century-long reluctance to search for unclaimed Jewish money, a veteran State Department negotiator alleges Washington also failed to turn over millions of dollars of heirless assets of Nazi victims.

At least \$6 million - in 1945 prices - in unclaimed American bank deposits may have belonged to Jews killed in the Holocaust, according to Seymour Rubin, the State Department lawyer who negotiated the 1946 Swiss-Allied postwar pact known as the Washington Agreement.

But the American government, which had seized European assets in the US, turned over only a fraction of that amount. Instead, in a move that could be compared to Switzerland's decision to take care of its citizens rather than make full restitution to the Jews, Washington gave so-called "German enemy assets" to the US War Claims Commission to compensate Americans for their claims for war-related losses.

"Legitimate as these claims were and are, they should not be satisfied out of properties which were vested as 'German' but belonged to victims of the Holocaust," Rubin said in a letter of March 11 to Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat, who is leading the American historical inquiry into the Nazi-era financial dealings.

After years of contending with thousands of Jewish claims, and battles in Congress, in 1963 the US government paid \$500,000 to the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization.

"To the best of my knowledge, there has never been a re-evaluation of this paltry amount," Rubin said in his letter.

Nor is one expected. The American inquiry, which is due to publicize its findings this month, is not addressing the heirless Jewish assets in the US, Eizenstat said in an interview in New York. Switzerland and the US were the two destinations for European "flight capital" - the assets which owners were trying to protect from the Nazis. At war's end, both countries found themselves with substantial amounts of heirless property, although now it is not possible to calculate the precise tally.

Many sent their assets to the US. While it was less "convenient" than Switzerland, they thought the US was safer, especially after the

Uncle Sam's golden secrets

What did the US government do with millions of dollars of assets that belonged to Holocaust victims? Marilyn Henry reports

early German successes in the war. "And it is likely that Swiss banks or other custodians with American connections would have transferred assets to the greater security of New York over Zurich," Rubin said in his letter. There are no firm estimates of how much European capital found

its way to the US during the war. However, from the outbreak of the war in 1939 to the end of 1941, foreign gold holdings in the US climbed from \$770 million to \$20 billion, according to historian Arthur L. Smith Jr., author of *Hiler's Gold: The Story of the Nazi War Loan*.

As long ago as 1940, *The New York Times* reported that the US was a "haven" for Swiss wealth. "Any invader of the Swiss canons, it is confidently predicted, would find that most of the movable wealth has already left the country," the *Times* reported on May 5, 1940. "Much of it has already come to Wall Street for safekeeping or investment." It was not only Swiss corporations or wealthy individuals who were dispatching cash to Wall Street, the *Times* said. Even those "of comparatively modest means are sending all they can spare," said the newspaper.

"The Wall Street banking fraternity has good reason to believe that many financial interests in the Balkans, Italy, France and even Germany, are working covertly through Switzerland to protect

their wealth despite the restrictions and heavy penalties imposed by their respective governments," the *Times* said.

IN AN effort to thwart Germany by cutting its finances, the US invoked the "Trading with the Enemy Act," under which the US seized assets located in the US that belonged to Axis states or their nationals. German-owned assets alone were worth more than \$540 million, according to the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization.

There was a special provision for "enemies of the enemies," which meant the Jews who were nominally German. Otherwise, German Jews would have been considered enemy nationals whose property could be seized and retained by the US government.

Survivors and their heirs recovered their property after the war, while the JRSO, a charitable organization, was designated by American law as the "successor, or heir," for heirless and unclaimed Jewish property in Europe. It also was authorized to receive the unclaimed property of Jewish Nazi victims that had been seized in the US in 1942.

In a race to identify the heirless Jewish property in US banks, the JRSO dispatched a crew of European refugees to scour bank lists in New York, the principal destination for deposits.

"You could take a look at the bank books in the State of New York and discover that there was a lot of money in accounts that had been absolutely stagnant for 15 or 20 years," Rubin, who is now 82, said in an interview.

"All we could do was to take a look at all the dormant accounts, then try to decide which of those names looked as if they were Jewish."

That was how the JRSO came up with its figure of \$6 million in heirless assets in New York. But, Rubin said in his letter, "It was recognized that this was a rough estimate, reliable data not being available." By then, Rubin had left the State Department to work for the American Jewish Committee in Washington, where he spent more than a decade trying to get the Swiss and the Americans to

turn over heirless Jewish assets.

Although Swiss banks had been suspected of cloaking the ownership of accounts in the US, they apparently had to relinquish significant control during the war, when the "Trading with the Enemy Act" and other rulings froze a substantial percentage of

As Congress considered a US settlement for heirless Jewish assets, opposition eroded the sum, from \$3 million to \$1 million, then to \$500,000.

the accounts in their New York branches.

It also appears that the Swiss banks lost their grip on dormant accounts in the US. In New York, for example, any account that is dormant for more than five years may be turned over to the state as "abandoned property." The state controller's office has said it is investigating the fate of those accounts to determine if Nazi victims' funds ended up in the state treasury in this way.

The Swiss-Allied Washington Agreement was intended to settle the question of how much Nazi gold had arrived in Switzerland, and Bern agreed to pay 250 million Swiss francs to close the gold question.

By that accord, the Swiss also were morally bound to give "sympathetic consideration" to the prospect of identifying heirless Jewish assets in Switzerland. These were to be made available for refugee relief. But the Swiss dawdled for years, justifying the delay by pointing out that the US wasn't making any headway either.

ORIGINALLY, Congress put a cap of \$3 million on the amount of heirless Jewish property that could be turned over to the JRSO. But then it came up against the War Claims Commission, which said the JRSO did not have the evidence to support a claim of \$3 million in heirless Jewish assets.

It was also a competition for scarce funds, as the War Claims Commission did not have enough in its coffers to satisfy the American claims for war losses, Rubin said.

"The War Claims Commission wanted all that money to go to what you might call their constituents - American claimants against Germany who had been bombed, or whose houses had been wrecked or who had suffered in prisoner-of-war camps," said Rubin. "So it said to Congress: '\$3 million is too much.' But how they got their figures, I really do not know."

As Congress considered a US settlement for heirless Jewish assets, opposition kept eroding the amount, from \$3 million, then to \$1 million, then to \$500,000. When the Bureau of the Budget told Congress that it wanted the settlement reduced to \$250,000, Representative Isidore Dollinger of New York exploded. "There is no basis for any further cut," he told Congress. "These are not appropriated funds. They are, rather, the proceeds of the property of people who died in Hitler's concentration camps."

Finally, in June 1963, the US government paid \$500,000 to settle all claims submitted by the JRSO. The settlement came with the proviso that all funds be used in the US for the rehabilitation and resettlement of Nazi victims.

The \$6 million that the JRSO refugee crew found, looking for Jewish-sounding names on wartime dormant bank accounts, would be worth an estimated \$39 million today.

That is more than the Swiss banks located last year when they identified dormant Holocaust-era accounts in Switzerland.

"I do not know what the amounts will be, and I do not wish to engage in exaggerated guesses," Rubin said in his letter to Eizenstat. "But both on the count of amounts, and of rectification of injustices, the fate of heirless assets in the United States, as elsewhere, deserves at least the 'sympathetic consideration' which was promised under the Washington Accord."

PARENTING

Fun with non-competitive games

By RUTH MASON

Tired of your four-year-old crying each time he loses at Candyland? Can't figure out how to get your 10-year-old to win - or lose - like a good sport?

Maybe the problem lies not with the child, but with the game. Aside from the imaginary games young children play, almost all the board games and sports in which they indulge are competitive. In response to this, a group of people began creating and collecting what they called "new games" in the late 1970s. They have since been teaching these cooperative, non-competitive games to children and adults throughout the world - including Israel.

Dale LaFevre, one of the early pioneers of the movement, has written three books on the subject: *New Games, More New Games* and *New Games for the Whole Family* (Putnam Publishing Group).

The games are fun, involving and usually generate a lot of laughter. We taught some of them to my son's second grade class on his birthday and everyone had a great time! Here are some new games to play with your children - or even your friends.

Face Pass: Players sit in a circle so all can see each other. You make a strange or funny face and turn to the person on your right. The person you turned to carefully copies your face, then slowly changes his or her expression to make a new face which she passes on to the person on his or her right.

Dead Lions: Have all the players, or lions, except one - the "hunter" - from the zoo - lie on their backs. They must play dead so the hunter won't catch them. If they move and the hunter sees them, they are caught and must join the hunter and help him or

her. Only breathing and blinking are allowed.

The hunters can do anything to get lions to move except touch them (no spitting!).

Quack! This one's a little more active. All the players stand with their legs apart and their torsos hanging down with their hands holding their knees or ankles. While looking between their knees, the players walk backward. Every time two people touch, backside to backside, they make eye contact through their legs and loudly say "Quack!" Then they move on till they bump someone else.

Wizards: This is an even more active outdoor game. You need at least five players to form a circle and close their eyes. You run your hand gently down the middle of the back of those who will be wizards - about one wizard for every five players. Have everyone open their eyes and run to escape

the wizards. (No one knows who they are, of course.) The wizards make the same stroking motion down a player's back to freeze him or her. A bug from another player unfreezes a frozen player. After a few minutes, pick new wizards.

Cats and Mice: This is for a group of nine or more. Everyone stands in groups of three, linking elbows. Start by picking a "cat" (anyone standing on the edge of a threesome) to chase a "mouse" (also someone on the edge). The mouse runs away from the cat and if she can link elbows with a group of two, she is safe. But then the person on the other edge of her threesome becomes the cat and the old cat becomes the new mouse. If the cat tags the mouse before she reaches the safety of a threesome, roles reverse and the cat becomes the mouse, the mouse becomes the cat. Have fun!

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BUSINESS

in brief

Foreign currency reserves up \$1.4b.

The country's foreign currency reserves totalled \$15.336 billion last month, up \$1.417b. from the February total, the Bank of Israel announced yesterday. The sharp increase in reserves was because of large amounts of movement of capital in the business sector, according to the central bank.

David Harris

Release of details on state revenues delayed

The Finance Ministry decided yesterday not to publish details of state expenditure and revenues for the first quarter until it has had time to consider them. Particular attention is being paid to these figures by Treasury officials and minister Dan Meridor, because they will base their decision on whether to make an additional budget cut on the size of the budget deficit since January. The figures are likely to be published before the weekend, but a decision on a cut seems likely only next week.

David Harris

Dollar up 3.4% against shekel in first 3 months

The dollar gained 3.4 percent in value against the shekel during the first quarter, according to Central Bureau of Statistics data published yesterday. The dollar ended the first three months at NIS 3.3610, which was a 0.45% increase since February 28.

David Harris

Committee sends cable bill on for first reading

The Knesset Economics Committee yesterday approved for the first reading a bill from Avraham Poraz (Meretz-Shinui) calling for apartment-holders to be connected to cable television without needing the consent of others in the building.

The proposal was accepted by a vote of 4-3, with two abstentions. Those opposing the bill all represented religious parties.

David Harris

Daily TA-Beersheba train service to start Sunday

A daily train service from Sunday through Thursday between Tel Aviv and Beersheba will begin operating from Sunday, Israel Railways announced yesterday. One train will run in each direction, departing Tel Aviv at 7:09 a.m. and the return journey leaving Beersheba at 6:02 p.m. Journey-time will be one hour and forty minutes. Initially there will be two stops on the trip, at Kiryat Gat and Lod.

David Harris

Marriott buys Renaissance Hotel Group

Marriott International Inc. announced it has completed its \$1 billion acquisition of Renaissance Hotel Group NV, which operates and franchises hotels in 38 countries. Marriott's offer, announced last month, topped a \$890 million offer for Renaissance by Doubletree Corp. Renaissance, based in Hong Kong, paid a \$15m. breakup fee to Doubletree.

Renaissance stockholders received \$30 a share from Marriott, more than 10 percent above the \$26.67 a share that Doubletree Corp., based in Phoenix, had set for the company. The acquisition gives Washington, DC-based Marriott a new hotel development partner in Hong Kong-based New World Development Co., the former principal Renaissance shareholder.

Combined, Marriott and Renaissance Hotel Group operate or franchise 1,300 hotels with about 275,000 rooms.

Reuters

Saudi's Nat'l Commercial Bank adding investors

Saudi Arabia's National Commercial Bank (NCB) is widening its ownership to 20 Saudi investors, a bank official said yesterday. He said a Saudi cabinet decision on Monday to change the status of the kingdom's biggest privately owned bank from a joint liability company to a Saudi joint stock company was "a positive development."

"This means that the investors will be widened from a few owners to 20," the official said. "It is an important development for the bank." He said that under the change, the investors, all Saudis, would not be allowed to sell their stakes to outsiders for at least two years.

Reuters

Bank Hapoalim '96 profit up 9.2% to NIS 811m.

By JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

Bank Hapoalim recorded a 9.2 percent increase in annual net profits last year to NIS 811 million. Net return on equity went up to 11% from 10.9% in 1995.

Fourth-quarter net income rose to NIS 121.8m. from NIS 105.7m. in the 1995 corresponding period.

Hapoalim, the country's largest bank with \$47.9 billion in assets, attributed the increase in profitability to a rise in financing profit and operating income, higher profits from affiliated companies and income from the sale of

excess holdings in non-financial companies.

Bank Hapoalim chairman Amram Sivan said that increased competition, caused by the government's decreased holding in the banks, also helped improve performance. "The modest gain from financing profit [came as the result of] a sharpening of competition," said Sivan.

A group which includes US businessman Ted Arison, Claridge Israel and the Dankner Group have submitted their bid for the bank. The government expects to receive a bid from a group led by

New York businessman Jeffrey Keil.

The government currently has a 77% holding in Bank Hapoalim.

While Sivan applauded the effects the government's privatization plans are having on the banking industry, he criticized the Bank of Israel's tight monetary policy. He also called on the Treasury to further restrict its spending.

Hapoalim's profit from financing activities before provision for doubtful debts went up 2.3% last year to \$1.08b.

Hapoalim's provision for doubtful debts decreased 2.4% to

\$325.1m. from \$333.4m.

Operating and other income rose 3.2% last year to \$669m. The bank said increased customer activity contributed to higher income from fees for foreign currency transactions and computerized services.

Income from capital market activity decreased due to the bear market, the bank said.

Hapoalim said it is currently in the advanced stage of implementing its restructuring program, which it began at the end of 1995. Part of the restructuring includes improving the bank's computer system to enhance customer service.

Frenkel: Bill to weaken governor will fail

By DAVID HARRIS

The prime minister, finance minister and government as a whole will vote against MK Avraham Shohat's (Labor) private bill to establish a board of governors at the Bank of Israel, governor Jacob Frenkel declared yesterday.

The Knesset Finance Committee will discuss tomorrow Shohat's proposal, aimed at reducing the powers of the governor.

Dr. David Klein, head of the central bank's monetary division, is this month expected to complete a report recommending a series of reforms for the bank, which would effectively form the basis for a new Bank of Israel Law.

This document, once considered by Frenkel, will be forwarded to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Finance Minister Dan Meridor. It follows from an interim report by a committee under the chairmanship of Tel Aviv University economist Zvi Zussman.

After Frenkel's call on Monday for a fully convertible shekel, he indicated yesterday that the Finance Ministry is still not prepared to agree to the full package of measures for liberalizing currency laws submitted to it by the Treasury. While refusing to detail the proposals, Frenkel said the Treasury has been considering them "for more than a few months."

MKS and business leaders used the opportunity of this week's publication of the central bank's annual report to launch a series of attacks on Frenkel himself, monetary and fiscal policy and the government, with businessmen also demanding immediate action in the Knesset.

While falling short of calling for Frenkel's resignation, Knesset Economics Committee chairman Elie Goldschmidt (Labor) said the central bank's monetary policy is "causing the destruction of industry and the Israeli economy. I believe the governor thinks he is working for the good of the economy. I say he's making a fatal mistake. There have been instances in history where one person has been correct and all others wrong: this is not one of them."

MKS Shohat, Silvan Shalom (Likud) and Haim Oron (Meretz) were all critical of current policy.

While Frenkel was answering questions from the Knesset Finance Committee on the annual report, representatives of the business community were calling on the Finance Ministry for help during a sitting of the Knesset Economics Committee.

Moshe Kornick, president of Lahav - The Federation of the Israel Self-Employed Organizations, called on the government and MKs to intercede in central bank policy in order to put the economy back on track.

"The governor's policies are causing the elimination of small businesses," said Kornick. His comments were supported by small business lobby chairman Yuri Stern (Yisrael B'alya).

Stern, who also chairs the Association of New Entrepreneurs, expressed his astonishment at Frenkel's comment that the economic benefits of the post-communist wave of immigration are now spent.

"The influence of this immigration is now at its peak," Stern said. "It has changed from a quantitative influence to a qualitative one, with start-up companies and the ability to tackle new markets in Eastern Europe."

While offering general support for Frenkel's economic stance, Amnon Rubenstein (Meretz) said he must reconsider his position over interest rates.



Stock markets drop in Europe

A trader wipes his eyes during the morning trading session at the London International Financial Futures Exchange yesterday. Stock markets tumbled across Europe yesterday morning as traders returned from their Easter break to catch up on two days of heavy losses on Wall Street, although some markets recouped some of the losses later in the day.

(Reuters)

COMPANY RESULTS

Israel Corp. reports 71% drop in '96 earnings

By JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

The Israel Corporation Ltd. reported a 71 percent drop in annual earnings to NIS 23.75 million from NIS 84m. in 1995. Revenues went up to NIS 3.22 billion from NIS 3.70b.

The company's fourth-quarter earnings increased to NIS 41m. from NIS 31m. in the same 1995 period.

Sales for the quarter went up 12.2% to NIS 1.28b.

The company attributed the

drop in annual profits to a one-time expenditure of NIS 24.4m. for restructuring done in some of its local and overseas holdings and to losses at Oil Refineries Ltd. and Zim Israel Navigation Company.

Earlier this year, Matty Morgenstern was forced to resign as general manager of Zim.

Harel Hamishmar, Israel's fourth-largest insurance firm, reported a 22% rise in annual

net income to NIS 54m. from NIS 44m. in 1995.

Yair Hamburger, director-general of the company, said the increase was the result of an improvement in the car insurance division.

PEC Israel Economic Corporation reported its net income increased last year to \$28.2m. from \$25.2m. in 1995.

The rise was attributed to net gain on sales of investments in affiliated companies and a decrease in the provision for income taxes.

PEC acquires interests in companies that are located here or are Israel-related.

Airlines wary of testing EU open skies

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European airlines are wary of testing new freedoms to fly throughout the bloc since problems such as subsidies, airport congestion and a shortage of slots darken their horizon for now.

But airline executives and analysts expect the impact of more competition to be significant over time.

Starting yesterday, carriers from the European Union's 15 countries and the European Economic Area's Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein can operate domestic services in any of the other 17 without connecting flights from their home markets.

But airlines ranging from German giant Lufthansa to tiny Brussels-based Virgin Express play down the impact of the final stage in a decade of liberalization of the EU aviation market, seeing it as one of many steps en route to fully open skies.

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ISRAEL MONEY MARKETS				
Patah (foreign currency deposit rates) (11.9.96)				
Currency (deposit for)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	Rate
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	4.750	5.000	5.275	3.6917
German mark (DM 200,000)	3.875	4.000	4.250	3.3670
French franc (FF 200,000)	1.825	1.825	2.125	2.0100
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	0.825	0.750	1.000	3.5182
Yen (10 million yen)	-	-	-	0.5983
Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (1.4.97)				
CHECKS AND TRANSFERS				
Currency basket	Buy	Sell	Rate	Rate
U.S. dollar	3.6270	3.6558	3.28	3.43
German mark	3.3242	3.3778	2.02	2.08
French franc	1.9920	2.0242	0.58	0.61
Japanese yen (100)	0.6890	0.6908	0.58	0.61
Dutch florin	2.6801	2.7038	0.58	0.61
Swiss franc	1.7719	1.8005	0.58	0.61
Swedish krona	2.3069	2.3442	0.58	0.61
Norwegian krona	0.4380	0.4481	0.48	0.48
Denmark krone	0.4898	0.5078	0.48	0.48
Finnish mark	0.5229	0.5314	0.48	0.48
Canadian dollar	0.6680	0.6788	0.51	0.54
Australian dollar	2.3890	2.4377	0.58	0.61
S. African rand	2.6187	2.6820	0.58	0.61
Belgian franc (10)	0.5652	0.5783	0.58	0.61
Austrian schilling (10)	2.8305	2.8782	0.58	0.61
Italian lira (1000)	1.9316	2.0238	0.58	0.61
Jordanian dinar	4.8300	4.9400	0.58	0.61
Egyptian pound	0.8500	1.0300	0.58	0.61
Irish punt	3.8738	3.9361	0.58	0.61
Spanish peseta (100)	5.2722	5.3573	0.58	0.61
	2.3488	2.3867	0.58	0.61
*These rates vary according to bank. Bank of Israel.				
SOURCE: BANK LEUMI				

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In pursuance to my jurisdiction according to paragraphs 9 and 19 of the Real Estate Brokers Law, 1986 (hereafter, "the Law"), and with the approval of the Knesset Legislation Committee, I hereby enact the following regulations:

- Written records of orders of real estate transactions (pursuant to paragraph 9 a) of the Law), must include at least the following details:
 - (1) The name, address and ID number of both broker and client
 - (2) The type of transaction (e.g. rental, sale etc.)
 - (3) A description of the property
 - (4) The approximate value of the deal
 - (5) The agreed brokerage fee, or the agreed percentage of the value of the transaction, and whether the fee (on either basis) includes VAT as laid down by the VAT Law, 1975.
- These regulations are in effect as of April 1, 1997.
- These regulations do not apply to transactions which have not been completed on the date on which these regulations come into effect.

Tsahi Hanegbi

מכרז מן הממשלה

SPORTS

in brief

Israel cricketers downed by West Africa

West Africa's cricketers beat Israel by 190 runs in their consolation round match at the ICC Trophy competition in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Scores: West Africa 247-6 (50 overs), Israel, 57 all out (21.1 overs).

Watson named Everton caretaker manager

LONDON (Reuters) - English premier league club Everton yesterday named Dave Watson as caretaker player-manager until the end of the season.

Watson, a centre-back, was hot favorite to be handed the reins until a big-name coach is appointed in the close-season. Joe Royle shocked the club by resigning last Thursday.

The move will increase speculation that Barcelona coach Bobby Robson may move to Merseyside at the end of the Spanish season.

Sa Pinto suspended for hitting Portugal coach

LISBON (Reuters) - Sporting striker Ricardo Sa Pinto was suspended from selection for the national team yesterday for hitting Portugal coach Artur Jorge last week.

The Portuguese Soccer Federation said in a statement the suspension would be "for a period to be determined immediately after the conclusion of an inquiry."

Earlier yesterday *Bola* newspaper said the Lisbon club would fine Sa Pinto between five and seven million escudos (\$29,000-\$41,000).

Rusedski withdrawal leaves Britain exposed

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's No. 2 tennis player, Greg Rusedski, pulled out yesterday from the team to face Zimbabwe in this weekend's Davis Cup match in London because of a wrist injury.

No. 1, Tim Henman, had earlier withdrawn after undergoing surgery on his elbow.

None of Britain's replacements is in the class of Zimbabwe's Byron Black who is ranked 46th.

Britain, who last made the Davis Cup final in 1978, need to win the Crystal Palace match to advance to the world group qualifying round.

Defeat would leave David Lloyd's team facing another season in the backwaters of Euro/Africa group one.

Baby in lucky escape as horse breaks free

LONDON (Reuters) - Television viewers around Britain witnessed a remarkable escape for a two-month-old boy after a horse broke free and ran into the crowd yesterday.

It happened at Southwell racetrack in the English Midlands at the start of the third race with the stalls positioned near the grandstand.

Formidable Flame burst out of the stalls, broke through the rails and into the crowd, scattering onlookers and trampling on the baby's pushchair. Remarkably, the child was not injured.

The runaway was caught soon afterwards when two men managed to grab hold of its reins.

Bulgaria wary of dropping points against Cyprus

SOFIA (Reuters) - Bulgaria need to avoid any slip-ups against Cyprus today if they are to keep in touch with Israel and Russia at the top of World Cup qualifying group five.

Israel went to the top of the standings on Monday after beating Luxembourg 3-0 but Cyprus, who beat Israel earlier in the campaign, proved they are no longer a complete pushover by holding Russia to a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

Bulgarian national coach Hristo Stoichkov, who is at odds with Bony, misses the game.

The Cyprus squad arrived in Sofia without striker Simka Gogic, who scored against Russia on Saturday but misses today's match because of an injury he picked up in the game.

Cyprus will also be without the suspended Costas Malekios.

Their coach Stavros Papadopoulos said his team's main objective was to try and prove Saturday's draw with Russia was no fluke by gaining at least a draw against the Bulgarians.

our guests playing under such conditions in their own country," Bony said.

"But we have several very technically able players and the weather could be both favorable and unfavorable for us," he admitted.

Bulgaria beat Cyprus 3-1 last December and will be looking to pick up another valuable three points under the captaincy of defender Trifon Ivanov. The volatile Hristo Stoichkov, who is at odds with Bony, misses the game.

The Cyprus squad arrived in Sofia without striker Simka Gogic, who scored against Russia on Saturday but misses today's match because of an injury he picked up in the game.

Cyprus will also be without the suspended Costas Malekios.

Their coach Stavros Papadopoulos said his team's main objective was to try and prove Saturday's draw with Russia was no fluke by gaining at least a draw against the Bulgarians.

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - Led by the backcourt of junior Miles Simon and freshman Mike Bibby, Arizona kept Kentucky from repeating as the national champion of US college basketball with an 84-79 overtime victory Monday night.

With three juniors, a sophomore and a freshman in the starting lineup, the Wildcats (25-9) made their first championship appearance a thrilling one in a game featuring 20 ties and 18 lead changes.

Fourth-seeded Arizona became the first team in tournament history to knock off three No. 1 seeds - Kansas, North Carolina and now Kentucky, the winningest programs in college basketball history.

"We just wanted it more than them," said Simon, the game's Most Valuable Player. "Their legs were dragging, they were in foul trouble. We just wanted it more." Kentucky was trying to become the second repeat champion since UCLA's stretch of seven straight titles ended in 1973.

Duke repeated as champion in 1992.

"It's been the most fun I've ever had as a coach," Kentucky's Rick Pitino said. "I walked off the court feeling very proud." Instead, Arizona won the first overtime championship game since Michigan beat Seton Hall 80-79 in 1989. Arizona reached the Final Four with an overtime win against Providence in the Southeast regional.

The thing that I'm so pleased about is this is a tough group," Arizona coach Luke Olson said. "At halftime, we talked about the toughest team mentally and physically would win the basketball game." Simon, who missed the first 11 games of the season because of academic problems, finished with 30 points. Bibby - the son of former UCLA star Henry Bibby, who won three college championships himself as a player - had 14 of his 19 points in the second half.

Arizona became the team with the most number of losses to win the college championship since Kansas was 27-11 in 1988.

One of the wildest final minutes of regulation in NCAA tournament history set up the overtime.



HARD DRIVE - Arizona forward Michael Dickerson (left) is slammed by Kentucky center Nazr Mohammed in second half action as Kentucky guard Ron Mercer looks on. Arizona won 84-79 in overtime.

Bibby made two free throws with 1:01 left to give Arizona a 72-68 lead. Ron Mercer,

Kentucky's hero in last season's championship game, then hit a 3-pointer with 51 seconds left to

bring Kentucky within one point. Bibby stood out near halfcourt

dribbling the ball as the shot clock wound down. He finally made a move with seven seconds left on it and found Bennett Davison for a layup that made it 74-71 with 18 seconds left.

Anthony Epps wasted no time in tying it, hitting a 3-point shot with 12 seconds to play.

Arizona's final chance to win in regulation ended when Simon turned it over a drive with two seconds left.

The overtime was a free throw shooting contest for Arizona, which scored all 10 of its points from the foul line. Davison hit the first two with 25 seconds gone to give Arizona the lead for good.

Kentucky (35-5) made just two field goals in the overtime, a basket by Anthony Epps with 1:46 left and a 3-pointer by Cameron Mills with 6.4 seconds remaining that just made it close.

Simon, who scored 24 points in the semifinals, was named the tournament's outstanding player. He finished 14-for-17 from the free throw line.

Arizona finished 34-for-41 from the line, compared to Kentucky's 9-for-17.

Scott Padgett led Kentucky with 17 points, 10 in the final five minutes of regulation.

Mercer, who struggled by shooting 7-for-21 and scoring 19 points in the semifinal win over Minnesota, finished with 13 on 5-for-9 shooting and had nine rebounds. Mills and Nazr Mohammed each had 12 points for Kentucky and Mohammed grabbed 11 rebounds.

The quick pace everyone expected wasn't there, but both teams played solid defense throughout. The game was decided by one of the backcourts, Bibby and Simon, even though they had 11 turnovers compared to two by the Kentucky guards.

Epps was 4-for-13 from the field and had 11 points, while Wayne Turner was 4-for-9 for eight points.

After Kentucky went on a 7-0 run to tie the game 20-20 with 8:00 left, neither team led by more than two points the rest of the half and there were five lead changes. The last of those came with 57 seconds left as Eugene Edgerman made two free throws to give Arizona the 33-32 half-time lead.

Opening day '97: Jackie Robinson's signature is everywhere

NEW YORK (AP) - By the time Frank Thomas stepped into the batter's box yesterday to face Cy Young winner Pat Hentgen, one of the biggest changes in US Major League Baseball this season was obvious.

Standing in SkyDome's on-deck circle was Albert Belle in a White Sox uniform. Tonight in Toronto, the Blue Jays show off their top newcomer when Roger Clemens pitches against Chicago.

Opening day (late last night Israel time) featured 12 games, including the World Series champion New York Yankees at Seattle and the new-look Florida Marlins, coming off a 26-5 record in spring training, at home against the Chicago Cubs. No interleague games are scheduled until June.

This is the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier, and the season is dedicated to his memory.

Special commemorative balls have been made to mark the occasion, and are to be used in every team's home opener.

Another change for 1997: Having seen a snowout at Fenway Park and freezing temperatures at Tiger Stadium and Wrigley Field for early home openers last year, baseball adjusted its schedules in an attempt to beat the cold weather.

As a result, all five domes in the majors were in use yesterday, and every West Coast club in both big leagues begin the year at home.

Cincinnati and Baltimore, which traditionally play at home on opening day, were the only typical cold climate clubs

playing at their own, open-air parks yesterday.

All 14 National League teams played yesterday. In addition to Chicago-Florida and Colorado-Cincinnati, it will be NL champion Atlanta at Houston, St. Louis at Montreal, Philadelphia at Los Angeles, New York at San Diego and Pittsburgh at San Francisco.

The Braves, trying to win a record sixth straight division title, open their new Turner Field on Friday.

In the American League, in addition to Chicago-Toronto and New York-Seattle, it's Kansas City at Baltimore, Milwaukee at Texas, Detroit at Minnesota. Today, Boston plays at the newly named Anaheim Angels and Cleveland visits Oakland.

Among the top players in new places are Matt Williams, Marquis Grissom and David Justice with Cleveland and Moises Alou, Bobby Bonilla and Alex Fernandez with Florida. Jim Leyland of the Marlins is one of six managers with new clubs.

AL MVP Juan Gonzalez, St. Louis ace Andy Benes and highly touted Montreal rookie outfielder Vladimir Guerrero also was absent on opening day, all because of injuries.

Mike Mussina, scheduled to start for the Orioles, was scratched Monday because of a calcium deposit in his elbow.

Jimmy Key, signed by Baltimore after winning the clinching Game 6 of the World Series for the Yankees, pitched instead.

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Lemieux has 610th career goal as Penguins beat Florida

PITTSBURGH (AP) - Mario Lemieux's 610th career goal tied Bobby Hull for sixth place on the NHL's all-time list, and Jaromir Jagr scored his first goal in six weeks as the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Florida Panthers 4-3 Monday night.

Lemieux set up Jagr's 46th goal to put the Penguins up 3-0, then restored their two-goal lead with a power-play goal at 18:30 of the second after the Panthers had rallied with consecutive goals.

The Penguins have won two straight since Jagr's return from a month's layoff with a groin injury allowed coach Craig Patrick to renege the Lemieux-Francis-Jagr line. Hockey's highest-scoring line has combined for 15 points in the two games.

Stars 3, Oilers 1
In Edmonton, Alberta, goaltender Aarons Irbie made 17 saves in a

replacement role as the Dallas Stars beat the Edmonton Oilers 3-1 to extend their unbeaten streak to 10.

Dallas, 8-0-2 in their last 10, swept the four-game season series between the teams and moved within three points of the Colorado Avalanche for top spot in the Western Conference.

The Oilers remained tied with the Anaheim Mighty Ducks for fourth in the West with 77 points, but Edmonton holds an edge with two more wins. Both teams have five games remaining in the regular season.

Irbie entered the game with 31 seconds left in the first period after starter Roman Turek suffered a twisted ankle - sprawling to cover the puck in front of his net. Dallas put the game away with a pair of goals 33 seconds apart early in the third by Greg Adams and Gay Carbonneau.

Soccer legend Ferenc Puskas turns 70

BUDAPEST (AP) - The man that IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch calls "the world's most popular Hungarian" is turning 70 today's birthday bash for soccer legend Ferenc Puskas.

Today's birthday bash for soccer legend Ferenc Puskas, a first megastar - will be marked by awards, a gala evening of songs and tributes, a friendly between Hungary and Australia.

In the early 50s, Puskas was the centerpiece of a Hungarian national side that many considered the world's best team.

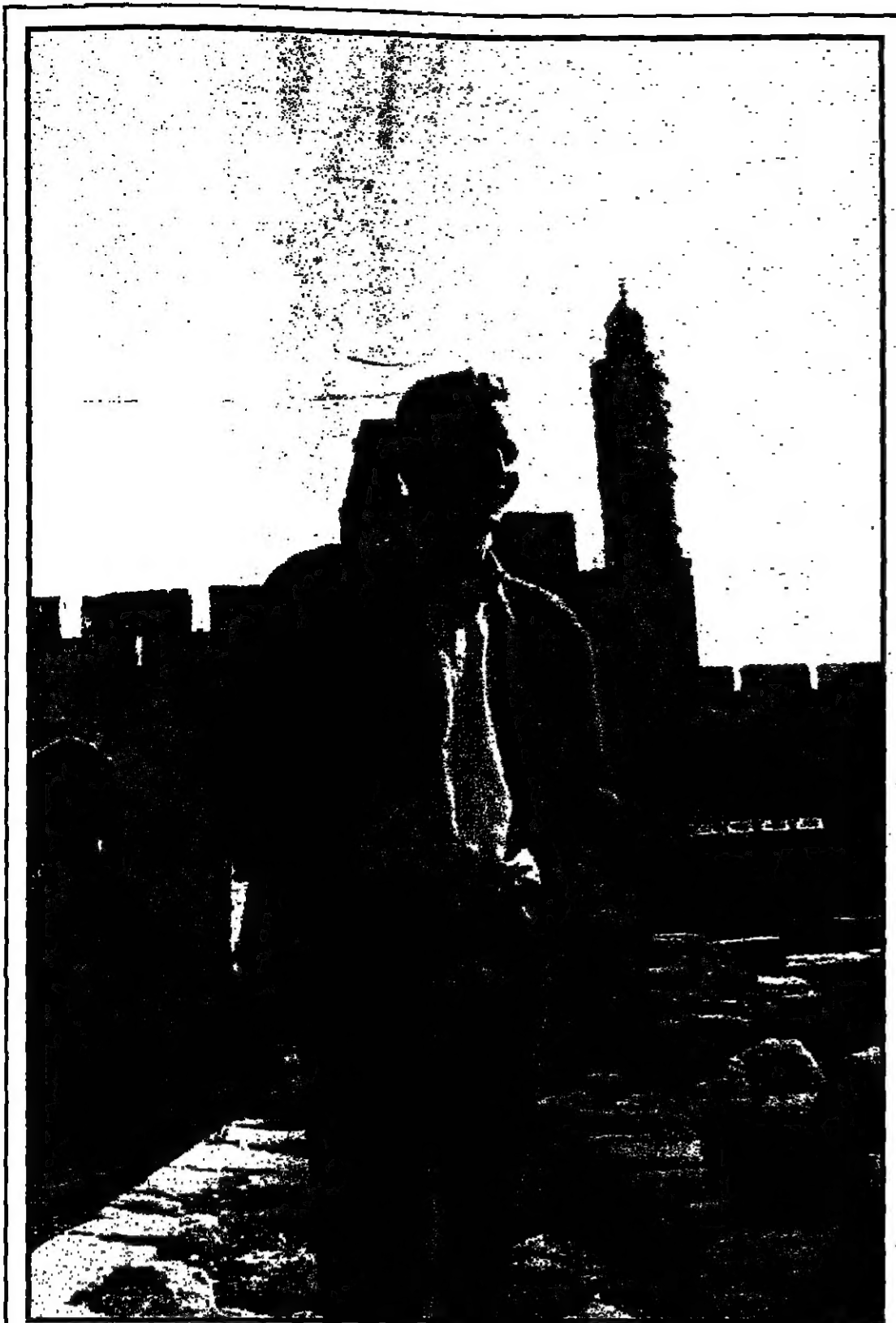
SCOREBOARD

CRICKET - West Indies staged a remarkable third Test victory over India in Bridgetown, Barbados on Monday.

Set just 126 to win and two days to achieve it, India were dismissed for a paltry 81.

Sports Editors: Joseph Hoffman and Gidon

הכחמן הנחש



Wilhelm's legacy

The great-grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm II visits the Tower of David Museum in Jerusalem yesterday. Prince George, 21, a German soldier, is here to retrace the journey to Palestine in 1898 of the kaiser, for whom an entrance large enough for vehicles was opened in the Old City wall, near the Jaffa Gate.

(Yitzhak Eliahu/Scoop 81)

Families can now add short epigraph to military graves

By LIAT COLLINS

Bereaved families of IDF soldiers can add a marble slab to graves in military cemeteries on which a two-line epigraph can be inscribed, the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee decided yesterday.

However, it also decided the current practice of allowing only the soldier's parents to be named on the headstones will continue. Thus, names of siblings and other relatives cannot be added, as many bereaved families had requested.

An additional term — "fell during an operation," with a mention of the location of the incident — is being added to the list of terms used to describe the circumstances of death.

After the helicopter collision at She'ar Yashuv

two months ago, several families were angry that the army wanted to mark the graves with the inscription "fell in the line of duty," — the standard inscription used for soldiers who die in military accidents.

They demanded an inscription that indicated their sons had died during a military operation, even though they had not actually died in battle.

The last Knesset passed a bill by MK Dedi Zucker (Meretz) that would allow bereaved families to add a personal inscription to tombstones in military cemeteries, but the law did not go into effect because the defense minister did not draw up the necessary regulations.

These new regulations will come into effect 30 days after Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai signs them.

IDF defends itself against racism rap

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

The IDF rolled out the best and the brightest of its Ethiopian immigrant officers yesterday, as it defended itself against charges of racism before the Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee.

Appearing as part of that effort, Chief of General Staff Lt-Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak agreed to look into the request by the committee and members of the Ethiopian community to have Maj. Michael Valitzkin — the officer severely reprimanded for telling Pvt. Avi Asemare that an army clinic was "off-limits to kushim" — dismissed from the IDF.

However, he cautioned the committee that it did "not know all the facts."

"People make mistakes, and this officer erred, and said he did and apologized for it, and it's a very disturbing mistake... I think that it's incorrect and unfair to say there is any kind of discrimination in the IDF against immigrants from any country, or any group," he said. "Immigrants from all sorts of countries serve in the IDF. Arabs, Beduin, all kinds of people serve there who live in this country, and there is no place they live in greater harmony than in the IDF."

"We can argue over whether the punishment was severe enough, as we can in any such case. I think that the condemnation is clear and absolute regarding this matter and others which I believe happen, but of which we are simply unaware."

Shahak pointed out that the officer had been tried and severely reprimanded months before the matter reached the media, and praised the soldier in Asemare's unit who took it upon himself to help him file a complaint over the

incident.

"There is a great deal that needs to be done, there's no doubt about that," Shahak said. However, he suggested that it be done on a continuing basis, rather than waiting for incidents such as the recent suicides of Ethiopian soldiers before taking action.

OC Manpower Maj-Gen. Gideon Sheffer told the committee said that the clinic incident "has no place in the IDF," but said the army was doing the utmost to absorb Ethiopian soldiers and encourage them to serve as officers.

"The IDF is the people's army, and everything that happens among the people, happens in the IDF," Sheffer said. "There are aberrations in the IDF as well, and there will continue to be, we can't guarantee there won't be. We will try to reduce it to the minimum possible."

"What happened last week to Avi hurts very much, but this is not what I've found in the army," said Capt. Mekoman Githon. He also called for Valitzkin's dismissal, but also to reduce "the incorrect publicity" and to show how the army tries hard to absorb Ethiopians.

"These incorrect reports will only cause us harm," he said. "When I call my mother now, she asks me: 'Are you alive? I thought they killed you.'"

Yaffa, a Gadna instructor from Karmiel who was Asemare's NCO during a training course, echoed Githon's concern. She said she had been approached by a young Ethiopian girl in Rishon LeZion about the reports on the suicides, who told her: "They're killing us off one by one." She also said the army was doing the "maximum" to absorb the new immigrants.

Asemare himself opened the session, recalling the incident at the clinic, after which he said: "I buried myself."

Relatives of soldiers who committed suicide were also present, and demanded to know more about the circumstances surrounding the deaths.

MK Adisa Massala (Labor) led the call for Valitzkin's dismissal, and said the Ethiopian community would consider petitioning the High Court of Justice if this is not done.

"How can you make do with such punishment?" he asked Shahak, warning that if Valitzkin is not dismissed to send a message to others, "this [behavior] may spread."

MK Yossi Sarid (Meretz) said Valitzkin's actions proved "how one idiot can undermine the work of an entire operation."

"This is not an army problem, but one of all of Israeli society," he said, "and apparently there is more than one idiot in the IDF, the same as in Israeli society."

Chairwoman Naomi Blumenthal (Likud) said that the committee cannot stand idly by if Ethiopian soldiers feel such terrible pain that they commit suicide.

She said it was hard to believe that Valitzkin, an immigrant from the former Soviet Union who "may have suffered from stigmas himself" could act as he did.

"This committee will not rest until these expressions of racism are uprooted from Israeli society," she said.

The committee recommended that an ombudsman be appointed from among the Ethiopian community as someone the soldiers could turn to, and urged the IDF to mete out deterrent punishment for any expressions of racism.

WEATHER		Galilee	
Haila	17-23	Tiberias	15-27
		Akko	19-26
		Samaria	13-23
Tel Aviv	16-23		
		Jerusalem	13-22
		Beer Sheva	14-27
		Dead Sea	19-29
Eilat	21-29		

Forecast: Partly cloudy, unseasonably warm and dry.

AROUND THE WORLD

	LOW	F	HIGH	F	
Amsterdam	01	34	17	65	clear
Berlin	03	37	18	63	clear
Buenos Aires	18	61	24	75	cloudy
Cairo	08	46	21	70	cloudy
Chicago	04	39	09	48	cloudy
Copenhagen	04	39	09	48	cloudy
Frankfurt	06	41	19	60	cloudy
Geneva	02	36	15	53	cloudy
Helsinki	02	36	15	53	cloudy
Hong Kong	19	65	21	70	cloudy
Jakarta	07	45	20	68	clear
Labor	07	45	18	64	clear
London	07	45	18	64	clear
Los Angeles	12	54	19	68	clear
Madrid	04	39	09	48	clear
Manila	01	34	17	65	clear
Montreal	04	39	09	48	clear
Moscow	02	36	15	53	clear
New York	01	34	17	65	clear
Paris	02	36	15	53	clear
Rome	01	34	17	65	clear
Stockholm	04	39	09	48	clear
Sydney	08	46	21	70	clear
Tel Aviv	08	46	21	70	clear
Toronto	04	39	09	48	clear
Vienna	02	36	15	53	clear
Zurich	05	41	19	60	rain

Winning cards

The winning cards in yesterday's Mifal Hapais daily Chance game were the 10 of spades, seven of hearts, 10 of diamonds, and nine of clubs.

New draftees more motivated

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Eyal, an 18-year-old recruit from Kibbutz Kinneret, wanted to know two things from Chief of General Staff Lt-Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak: Is there any chance his mandatory three-year service will be cut before he is demobilized, and is it true the army puts saltpepper in its food?

Shahak came face-to-face with today's recruits yesterday, when he paid a visit to the Induction Center.

Despite questions like Eyal's, the army says its new recruits are more motivated than those who shocked the nation seven months ago when many said they were too tired to serve in combat units.

"This is the best March draft I've ever seen," said Induction Center Commander Col. Avinoam Laufer.

"The percentage of those who opted for combat units is eight percent higher than last year."

The army said that motivation is

up thanks to an intensive program to highlight combat units, and the widely reported efforts to increase incentives for draftees, such as doubling their pay and giving them large demobilization bonuses.

He also said that there was a decline in the number of people dropping out of field units and today an average of 85%, instead of 80%, of those sent to combat units finish their training.

According to IDF statistics, the percentage of immigrants being drafted has remained static at one in six, but more are opting for combat duty.

The IDF holds three major drafts a year — December, April, and August. Like the population, each year the number of recruits grows. Laufer said this month's draft will be the largest ever.

Those reporting yesterday were all headed for the Armor Corps. But this month will see thousands of recruits being sent to Paratrooper, Nahal, Golani,

Border Police, Artillery, Combat Engineer, and Anti-Aircraft units. This is the last draft of the fiscal year. The next major draft in August will be of those currently in high school.

During last August's draft, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was visibly shocked to hear recruits tell him they did not want to serve in combat units. The apparent lack of motivation was let out of the bottle, and the IDF was forced to admit that there was a problem. As the nation grappled with the phenomenon, the army tried desperately to marginalize it.

Yesterday, top Manpower officers said there was a marked turn around not only in the educational level of the recruits, but also in their physical fitness.

As for Eyal, Shahak had some disheartening news for him.

"I don't think we are going to seriously work on the question of the length of service in the next three years. Even if there are some dramatic changes, I presume we would... release more reservists from duty before cutting the length of service," he said.

And the saltpepper? Shahak told the new soldiers to "eat the food and see if you can taste any difference. I don't expect there is."

Skin disease outbreak reported in Yeroham area

By JUDY SEGAL

An outbreak of leishmaniasis — a parasitic skin disease also known as "Rose of Jericho" — has occurred in the Yeroham area, and two and a half years after the first cases were diagnosed, it has still not been wiped out.

According to dermatologists at Soroka Hospital in Beer Sheva, the source of the major outbreak may be sand brought in for construction of new neighborhoods in the town. Drs. A. Biton, S. Namir, B. Moscovitch, and D. Vardi reported on the outbreak in the latest issue of *Harefuah*, the journal of the Israel Medical Association.

Leishmaniasis is an infection caused by a protozoan parasite. It is passed on by the bites of sandflies living on sand rats and certain gerbils, and the resultant boils on the skin resemble those of leprosy.

The disease has been mostly limited to the Jordan Valley and parts of the Negev, but never in Yeroham. According to Health Ministry statistics, there were 25 cases in Yeroham in 1995; 35 in 1996; and three cases so far this year.

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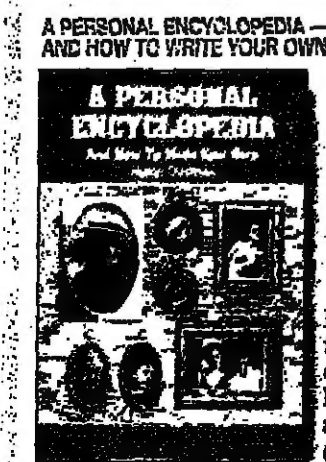
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